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## FOREWORD

THE Rev. A. M. Ward has placed the Indian Church in a great debt of gratitude by the contribution he has made to the Church in the sphere of Theology. I had the privilege of being one of his pupils and he was the first among my teachers to direct my thinking towards a theology based on the Bible and the apostolic faith. His concern for theological education in India has led him to devote much of his time in recent years to organizing this project of the Christian Students' Library. The two volumes which he himself now contributes are likely to be among the most useful in the series.

In writing the books, Dr. Ward has kept in mind the Serampore syllabus for the Outlines course in Christian Doctrine. Both Students and teachers will find the books very useful. Those who desire to go beyond the syllabus and do some advanced reading will find much help in the bibliographies recommended under each section.

Although the books are part of a series of text-books and conform to the pattern of such, I am glad to say that they are not just text-books intended to help students to prepare for examinations. They are primarily the work of a sound biblical theologian. Dr. Ward has brought into this work the deep insights both of his theological thinking and of his personal Christian experience. He has also made many valuable suggestions for the interpretation of the doctrines treated from the point of view of Christian Apologetics in India, and at many points he has related his teaching to other subjects in the curriculum.

I am sure, therefore, that these books will prove to be a very valuable addition to the Christian Students' Library.

J. R. CHANDRAN.



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

WHEN the programme of Basic Theological Text-books for India was first conceived, the books in English were meant only for limited circulation, to be used primarily for providing material for theological books in the many Indian languages. But soon it was realized that the books in English would have an independent place apart from the editions in other Asian languages and the Christian Students' Library was organized. Even then we did not expect the English edition to be circulated much beyond a small circle of readers in India. We have discovered, however that the need for books of this kind in English is greater than we had estimated. The first six numbers of the series were sold out within a few months of publication. Experience has also shown, to our great encouragement, that the books can be used profitably in many other Asian countries as well. Even though the books continue to be published under the auspices of the Senate of Serampore University, they are now meant for wider circulation. This explains the need for larger second editions of the first six numbers of the series.

Reports about this book in particular show that it is widely read and used as a text-book by theological colleges both in India and other Asian countries. Arrangements are in progress for the rendering of it into Malayalam and Tamil. Other regional languages also will be enriched by a translation of this book.

Except for a number of minor corrections, this edition of the book is virtually the same as the first. We are greatly indebted to the Rt. Rev. A. M. Hollis who has gone through the proofs and carefully checked up Bible references. We are also grateful to the author for his co-operation in bringing out this edition.

Bangalore  
*March, 1957*

J. R. CHANDRAN.

## THIRD EDITION

No change in substance but book lists are revised and brought up to date as at beginning of 1961.



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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN his generous *Foreword* my friend Principal Russell Chandran points out that the shape of these two volumes has been determined by the Serampore syllabus for the general study of Christian doctrine. Volume I covers the ground prescribed for Part One of the study and Volume II that for Part Two. In each case I have taken for my chapter headings the main themes set out in the syllabus. It is recommended that 'in the study of each doctrine the main emphasis shall be on the Biblical foundation of that doctrine and this part of the study shall occupy at least one half of the course. There will also be a short historical study of the doctrine indicating the main questions which have arisen in its historical development, to enable the student to appreciate its place in the life and thought of the Church of today. Finally, on the systematic side the object shall be to explain what is the generally accepted Christian position with regard to each doctrine.....'

In attempting, so far as in me lies, to be faithful to the spirit and the letter of this direction I have taken pains to incorporate in the text many references to Scripture. A friendly critic has suggested that in some cases the volume of reference may, at first sight, seem rather overwhelming to the student. I can see the point of this and have considered the wisdom of lessening the load. But further thought confirms my opinion that the references should stand and I plead that no attempt will be made to evade or limit their use in the study of, or teaching from, what I have written. If these books have any value it is as the framework of the Scriptures cited. I hold it of paramount importance that the study of theology should begin and continue with the Bible open and in use. I suggest, moreover, that the student reserve an inexpensive Bible and devise his own method of marking it, perhaps with the use of different coloured pencils, as an aid to study. It is not that I desire to advocate the method of building doctrine on mere 'proof texts', but that, on each great theme, the student should be confronted with the total witness of the revelation declared in Scripture. It is to be hoped that, so far as is possible, the whole section

in which the relevant verses occur should be read; and that every effort will be made to relate the reading and understanding to other parts of the curriculum.

As one writing primarily for the Church in India, I have tried not to forget the context in which we live and work and the background over against which the Gospel is preached. I make no apology for the assumption, manifest at many points, that I expect the study begun here to lead to expression in preaching. For the Christian the study of theology is no mere academic discipline but the means of effective witness. He is concerned to offer the Gospel with the aim of winning a response. Christian doctrine has its place in the Church's task because it is the content of the message in the thought of today. Such is the theme of Dr. Vincent Taylor's small but important book *Doctrine and Evangelism*. I have tried to make it my own.

The Christian claim, both implied and made explicit in what follows, to be the unique and final revelation makes acute the problem of the relation to other religions. In some parts of the world this is a matter of theory only but in India the matter becomes daily more urgent and none of the so-called 'solutions' of the past are likely to be of any use now.

The issues raised by Dr. D. G. Moses in his book, *Religious Truth and the Relation between Religions*, are carried a stage further in an article, *Christianity and the non-Christian Religions*, in the *International Review of Missions* (April 1954, 146 ff). He points out that the non-Christian religions, in recent years, have been through a process of radical self-reformation and that in this the dominant factor has been the impact of Christianity. Thus, for example, since the start of the modern missionary movement in the 19th century, Hinduism 'has absorbed practically every Christian doctrine or truth. It is no longer a world-denying religion. The *maya* doctrine has been re-interpreted. It stands only to warn the man who seeks to build his hopes on this world that the world has no real foundations and that, like a garment, it will perish. Hinduism no longer teaches that life in this world has no importance or ultimate meaning. God is also a God of purpose and He is fulfilling His purposes in the world. It is man's duty to align himself with God and



to work for a new heaven and a new earth'. He adds that Hinduism, in thus taking to itself today much of the content of the Christian faith, has never acknowledged the debt but claims to be rediscovering what is already there.

It may be open to question whether Dr. Moses' conclusions do not go beyond what his facts and arguments warrant. How far, for example, have these new ideas penetrated, or are likely to penetrate, the consciousness of the masses with whom the Church is in the closest contact and for many of whom the hearing of the Gospel comes as something utterly new? Nevertheless what Dr. Moses has written must be taken seriously by the student of theology. He will find help in the writings of another distinguished Indian Christian thinker.

In the closing pages of his book, *The Concept of Maya*, Dr. P. D. Devanandan discusses the modern trends of thought in Hinduism to which Dr. Moses refers. These show, it is argued, that a restatement of the Hindu view, fundamentally and variance with the old orthodoxy, is in the making and that here the Christian contribution is most relevant. What Dr. Devanandan means here is made explicit in a recent article, *The Gospel and This Freedom Age*, (*Guardian*, 8th January, 1953). He shows that the modern Hindu renaissance, whatever form it takes, is inspired by the reaffirmation of four basic assumptions—affirmations of faith which are generally accepted by every Hindu from peasant to philosopher. These are:

1. Ultimate Reality is essentially unknowable. This religious agnosticism is in fact formulated in various ways, but in every case it also affirms the undeniable *fact* of Ultimate Reality, which in some way is also regarded as one's own *real* self. We may, however, know God but partially; never as He is. The 'lower' forms of Hinduism hold that we experience Him in many 'manifestations' all of which are partially true, but none wholly true.

2. No one theological formulation about the nature of Ultimate Reality can claim absolute validity. All religions are equally true (and equally false); the exclusive claims of any one religion cannot be regarded as valid. Hinduism, therefore, permits no creed which states in an uncompromising formula: 'This accept, if you want to be a Hindu'. On

the contrary it says with easy tolerance: 'Believe what you think you should about Ultimate Reality. As many people, so many interpretations of God. None of them is wholly true'.

3. Since all religions are only partially true, it is possible that if one accept many different interpretations of God and Reality, believing in the essential truths for which they separately stand, the sum-total of partial truths will certainly be more than the partial truth affirmed by any one religion. The non-Hindu cannot quite understand this tendency to what he calls 'syncretism'. But to the Hindu such selective grouping of religious fundamentals is valid, since, by such a process, one stands to gain by the collective religious experience of many saints of God.

4. Hinduism recognizes the right of every Hindu to accept and practise whatever way of life he may find useful to his mode of thinking and his peculiar social circumstances. This strange blend of a religious pragmatism and a religious individualism, however, enforces one limitation. A man is free to say, 'This I believe, and this I don't'. But if he were to say, 'What I believe is *wholly* true and what I do not believe is *totally* false', then his religious outlook is un-Hindu. He forthwith ceases to be a Hindu. He cannot be called a Hindu; he is renegade. That is why Hinduism can 'tolerate' any number of sects, accept even people who choose to say they believe nothing at all.

Towards these, Dr. Devanandan concludes, the strategy of evangelism must be directed. The real task is to convince the Hindu of the validity of the Christian understanding about the nature of God revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This differs radically from the Hindu view. There is a great opportunity of fulfilling this task through the total witness of the Church to the Gospel committed to it.

It is to this end that Serampore requires the student of theology to take note of 'the main points of similarity to or difference from other Indian religious conceptions'. Accordingly I have pointed out, from time to time, the relevance of the particular theme under discussion to the mission of the Church. These references to the confrontation by the Gospel of the teaching of other religions in India are not exhaustive and cannot be so in a study of this nature. They are pointers to help the student relate his work to other aspects of study.

But, although they are cursory they are not unimportant. The Christian must know as much as possible about what the other man believes, neither despising it, nor merely taking passing interest in it, but really *caring*, for the sake of those to whom he would speak of God in Christ—men for whom Christ died. It is thus, moreover, that we are enabled to see the Biblical revelation in all its power and clarity.

We are all familiar with the Hindu argument that in Christian theology there is nothing fundamentally different from what is found in Hinduism. There is a need to be on guard against all varieties of the view that all religions are the same. They are not. The differences are essential. We are called to proclaim the God whose nature is revealed through His mighty acts recorded in the Bible to those whose thoughts about God are very different. Always there is the element of confrontation.

In all this we face the difficulty that while the Christian point of view is held by Christians with some degree of unanimity—especially as regards the clauses of the Creed treated in Volume I—in Hinduism there is far less in the way of a body of doctrine that is generally accepted. There is diversity of belief among Christians but the things in which they agree are far more numerous and fundamental than those about which they differ. The same common ground cannot be claimed for Hinduism. There are, of course, beliefs and points of view held in common by most Hindus but a man's claim to be a Hindu does not depend on what he believes as does the Christian. Hence the most I have been able to do is to attempt to relate to Christian doctrine those thoughts which, in the Hindu mind, have been most determinative of the attitude to God, man and the world.

What these are let a leading Hindu philosopher define. According to Professor Das Gupta 'the strongest current of thought which has found expression in the majority of the (Vedanta) texts is this, that the Atman or Brahman is the only reality and that besides this everything else is unreal. The other current of thought which is to be found in many of the texts is the pantheistic creed that identifies the universe with the Atman or Brahman' (*History of Indian Philosophy* 1, 50).

There can be no doubt, I think, that the Christian theo-

logian is justified in supposing that those influential doctrines, and their implications, are those to which to relate his thinking. It is true that there have been many protests in the past against the dominant trend of Hindu theology. Das Gupta finds a third current, 'that of theism which looks upon Brahman as the Lord controlling the world'. It may be doubted whether any of the protests have been permanently effective. Again and again the all-pervading monistic spirit with which the Hindu scriptures are imbued has kept the doctrine of God, notwithstanding the religious intension to the contrary, monistic in principle. Hence there is a fundamental difference between the theistic cults of Hinduism and the religion of the Bible. Despite all similarities the spiritual climate and dominant trend are radically different from those of what Kraemer has taught us to call *Biblical Realism*. This is true not only of high philosophy but of thought and practice at every level. In one way or another the two currents described by Das Gupta have universal and overwhelming influence.

It is necessary to add that we cannot but admire the heights to which Hindu philosophy has reached; and to do this not only for the sake of fairness but because in so speaking we reach the heart of the matter. The achievements of Hinduism are the results of man's search for God; but the Gospel is God's gift to man. Hinduism, in common with other religions not deriving from the Bible, beings with the universe as it finds it and then seeks to discover the principle of reality within it. It is on the background of religion dominated by impersonal ideas of God that we in India have, for the most part, to proclaim the Biblical doctrine of the living God, Maker and Father of all men, who longs for them to be in willing communion with Himself and who is ceaselessly and costingly active to this end.

My argument here, and many of the references in the text which follows, refers to one only of the religions of India. I have not forgotten the others, but manifestly Hinduism is the primary reference. I have paid some attention below to the challenge of Islam and feel less guilty about the paucity of reference thereto in view of the work being done by the Henry Martyn School of Islamics through its teachers, writings, and the quarterly *Bulletin*. Nor have I forgotten

other ways of life, apart from religion, which constitute part of the background for the preaching of the Gospel, notably Communism. In my writing I have had constantly in mind the comment made by a friend to Dr. C. E. Raven: 'So long as nearly half mankind thinks that life is a thing to be escaped from, and nearly the other half thinks it a thing to be enjoyed, and a minority of us Christians think it a thing to be redeemed there can be no real or lasting peace'. It is the constant concern with these alternative concerning man's relation to life which helps to give actuality to the study of theology.

I should add that I have not taken space always to develop my references to Hinduism because much of what I have to say has been gathered in Part II of Sargant and Ward: *W. E. Tomlinson, a Memoir and Some Writings*. Other works useful for developing the ideas suggested here are:

- H. Kraemer: *Religion and the Christian Faith*
- H. Kraemer: *World Cultures and World Religions*
- G. E. Phillips: *The Gospel in the World*
- R. C. Zaehner: *At Sundry Times*
- E. L. Allen: *Christianity among the Religions*
- E. C. Dewick: *The Indwelling God*
- A. C. Bouquet: *Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*
- D. W. Gundry: *Religions, a Preliminary Historical and Theological Survey*
- N. Smart: *A Dialogue of Religions*
- P. D. Devanandan: *The Gospel and Renascent Hinduism*
- J. W. Sweetman: *Islam and Christian Theology*
- K. Cragg: *Sandals at the Mosque*
- E. Rogers: *A Christian Commentary on Communism*

I hope that these volumes may be of some use as they stand in English but I must stress that the main purpose for which they are written, as is the case with all the books in this series, is to assist the production of versions in the languages of India, and perhaps beyond. The fact that my work is designed to be the handmaid to something more important has had some influence on the form of the writing and presentation. It was my original intention to condense my material into one volume in note form. To that end I prepared some specimen sections and consulted friends versed in the art of translation. They all agreed that it would be better to treat fewer themes more fully and to indicate lines on which the teacher or version writer might

develop his presentation according to his understanding of the background and special needs of his area.

Hence the substance of these volumes represents what one man regards as of first importance for the beginning of the study of theology. The matters dealt with have been treated fairly fully, even with some element of repetition, with a view to making the meaning as clear as possible. Notes and suggestions for further reading indicate lines on which the themes may be developed in teaching, or in the versions, as may seem good to the persons concerned. The book lists are full and contain some formidable titles. Here I have had the teacher and version writer mainly in mind and I hope that the suggestions may be of use in stocking libraries. But I have not forgotten the student who must expect, in the study of the Queen of Sciences, to have his mind stretched.

Those who use these volumes for teaching or for versions are, of course, free to condense or develop as they think fit. I ask only that any substantial modification of, or deviation from, what I have written should be acknowledged. Should they be thought worthy of use in other parts of the world many of the references will have to be changed for those of more immediate relevance. Words, I understand, are the money of the foolish but the counters of the wise. I hope that no attempt will be made to produce a literal translation of these volumes. Any value they may have lies in the thoughts not the words. Let the version writer absorb the meaning, check it by Scripture, enrich it by reference to the many better books recommended, supply his own illustrations, and then write his own book in language understood by his people. I suggest that whenever 'technical' theological words are translated they be gathered together in an appendix as an English-Vernacular glossary, and that the attempt be made, in other areas, to produce a list of vernacular theological terms as has been done in Tamil.

It will be noted that I have avoided the use of footnotes. I have done so on the ground that they tend to distract the attention of the beginner. It is all the more necessary to make full acknowledgement of my sources. How great is the range of my indebtedness can be seen in the lists of books recommended for further reading. These are, for the most part, monographs. Of the many excellent single volume

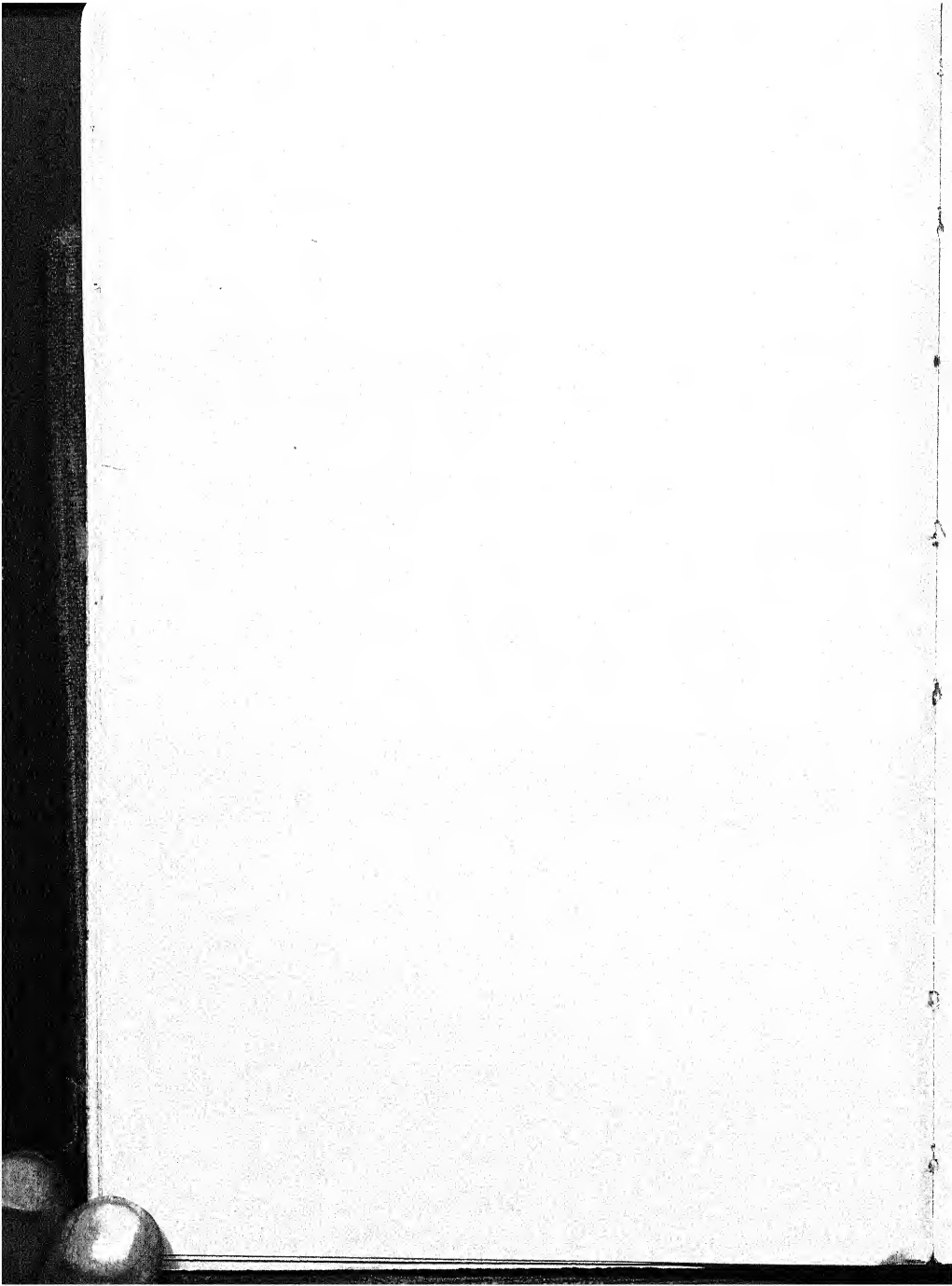
'Outlines' I have drawn on chiefly, and warmly recommend, the following:

- O. C. Quick: *Doctrines of the Creed*  
N. H. Snaith: *I Believe in...*  
Vincent Taylor: *Doctrine and Evangelism*  
A. R. Vidler: *Christian Belief*  
W. M. Horton: *Christian Theology, an Ecumenical Approach*  
J. Burnaby: *The Belief of Christendom*  
T. E. Jessop: *An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*  
J. S. Whale: *Christian Doctrine*

I note with pleasure, the greater because it was unpremeditated, that these writers represent the traditions now gathered in the Church of South India. We can rejoice that in large areas of doctrine, especially as regards the subjects treated in Volume I, agreements are more generous than denominational boundaries would suggest. I have to express particular gratitude to Bishop Stephen Neill to whose friendship, counsel and writings I owe a very great deal and to whom much in what follows is due. Nor must I forget to acknowledge the help of my colleagues of the Editorial Committee in Serampore and of the Revs. J. R. Chandran, A. H. Dammers, S. Estborn, A. T. Hanson and Dr. Olive Edwards who read the manuscript, in whole or in part, and gave me the benefit of criticism and encouragement. The Revs. Owen Cole, John Jones and Ralph Taylor have helped me to check references and proofs. To those and to my students at Bangalore who, through nineteen happy years, have given me more help than they may know, I offer my gratitude.

*Stephen Neill*







## CHAPTER I

### BELIEF IN GOD

#### 1. I BELIEVE IN....

WHAT exactly do we mean when we say the first sentence of the Creed? We do not say simply: I believe in God. There is nothing distinctively Christian in such a confession of faith. Jews, Hindus, Muslims and many others may say it with us. Moreover, nothing is easier than to use the word God and to mean little or nothing by it. Before we can assess the value of a confession of faith in God we need to know what kind of a God is being confessed.

All religions presuppose the existence of a supreme unseen power called God. This word has equivalents in every language. The great question is: What do we mean by the word *God*? This is the fundamental doctrine of all theology. The word, in whatever language, has a great variety of meanings. 'Tell me your beautiful names for God and I will tell you mine', said a Muslim saint to a Christian friend. In Hinduism the word may mean anything from the absolute of the philosopher to the village deity. There is a form of worship in India wherein the devotee recites the thousand names represented by the idol, putting on it a flower-petal for each name. Many names may suggest many qualities, often contradictory of one another. The Hindu argues that such contradiction is necessary to express the infinite variety of God; but the Christian, as we shall see, has another answer.

We are concerned, throughout this book, to set out what the word God means in the Christian religion. There are other religions which have many doctrines of God and treat them in isolation from one another e.g., Vaisnavism, Saivism, etc. Christianity also speaks of its doctrines but has one supreme doctrine—God known in Christ through the Holy Spirit. On this depend all the doctrines which we are to consider. The fact that we have to separate the various themes for purposes of study does no harm so long as we remember to hold them together as aspects of our belief in God.

Nor do we say simply: I believe in Almighty God. There are many for whom God is Almighty, but only that. This falls far short of the full Christian doctrine of God. For this we need all the words in the Creed: *Father, Almighty, Creator*; all together and in their Christian meaning. By this I mean that the first and determining word in the Creed of a Christian is Jesus. If we are to be able truly to say: I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator, we must first learn to say: I believe in Jesus Christ the Lord. The divine Fatherhood is not the starting point of faith but its goal. We reach it only by way of Jesus Christ. From the New Testament onwards, e.g., I Pet. 1:21, Christians are those who are believers in God through Jesus. There are faiths in a God of some kind or other with which Jesus has nothing to do, but Christian faith owes its being to, and derives its character from, Jesus. We believe in God through Him. This approach is vital to our task. However, before we proceed to consider the content of the faith we must consider some of the implications of the word *belief*.

The first thing to note is that we say: 'I believe *in* God', and not just: 'I believe that God exists'. There are some who think it good to try and prove that God exists before going on to consider what He is like. They argue that there are sufficient facts to enable the human reason to demonstrate the existence of God. There are some famous 'proofs' which proceed from the evidence of history, nature, and conscience and point to the probable existence of a first cause, an eternal designer, and a moral ruler. It is also argued that the very thought of a perfect being implies that He exists. These so-called proofs are not of first importance. Apart from the fact that they tend to begin by assuming what they want to prove, they lead to very limited conclusions e.g., 'By God I mean the one creative reason who is the source of all existence and sustains it'. This is true but it is very far from being what the Christian means by God.

The poverty of the conclusion should convince us that this whole method of approach is wrong. A. S. Eddington, a great scientist who knew more about proof and evidence than most men, once pointed out that there is no conclusive proof that either we ourselves or our friends exist. Yet we have certainty on these matters before any questions are raised.

'In the case of our human friends', he writes, 'we take their existence for granted, not caring whether it is proven or not. Our relationship is such that we could read arguments designed to prove the non-existence of each other and then laugh together over so odd a conclusion. I think it is something of the same kind of security we should seek in our relationship with God. The most flawless proof of the existence of God is no substitute for it; and if we have that relationship the most convincing disproof is turned harmlessly aside'.

Again we stress the point that we are not concerned to prove that God is, but to know who He is. This is especially relevant in India. The majority of our fellows need no persuading that there is a God. They accept the existence of any number of gods. It is our concern to proclaim the one true God and that He is Father. To believe in God is not merely to assent to the fact that God exists but to know who He is and to put our whole trust in Him for this life and forever.

Belief in God does not begin with argument about God. That way implies a prior question: Why should I believe? No argument can lead to faith. A being whom man can prove is not the proper object of faith and worship. If we begin by asking why in fact we do believe in God we shall conclude that it is only God's own disclosure of Himself that convinces us that He is and declares who He is. This is the primary presupposition of this book. Its aim throughout will be to help the student: let God be God. God is discovered by man only in so far as He has made Himself known to man. Our knowledge of God is not deduced by argument; it is not anything we reach; it is the gift of God. It has pleased God to reveal Himself, and this not merely the unveiling of the fact of His existence, but the declaring of who He is by what He does. We begin with what God has done and so learn who He is.

*Note:* Serampore requires that the study of Christian doctrine be prefaced by an Introduction dealing with such matters as sources, scope, and methods of Christian Theology. With these I have dealt at some length in my book *Our Theological Task*. I do not think it necessary to repeat here, even in outline, what I have there written. There are certain matters, however, which should be stressed. These I have attempted to treat in the remaining sections

of this chapter. The difficulty of the themes and the rather compact treatment may make them hard for the beginner, especially if he is reading them without the help of a teacher. I suggest that the sections be read now so as to give a general idea of their content and that the student return to them at a later stage, after reading the whole book, when he will find that they convey more meaning. He will find that from Chapter II onwards the style and substance are less difficult.

## 2. THE GROUNDS OF BELIEF

We have seen that belief in God calls for much more than argument designed to prove that He exists. Argument may have some value in helping us to see and to testify that the grounds of our belief are reasonable. But we must not think that human reason is an instrument to discover truth about God. It is at most a means to receive and understand the given evidence. We must never ask the mind to do what is beyond its own power. It is best to begin by asking, in fact, we do believe in God. It is certain that others will ask us this question. It is no good repeating the arguments of other believers. We must show what are the reasons which have persuaded us to put our trust in God.

Most Christians would probably say that we know something of God from the beauty and order of nature; from the lives and words of good and believing men and women with whom they have come into contact in the school and church and who have imparted something of their own belief; from the testimony of their own conscience, especially from their reading of the Bible with its massive witness to the living God; and most of all from Jesus. This brief summary can best be illustrated from the Bible itself e.g., 2 Sam. 12:1 ff.; 2 Kings 23:1 ff.; Ps. 19:29; 44:1; 99:6 ff.; Isa. 6:5; 40:26; John 1:14 ff.; 9:2ff.; 14:9; 16:12ff.; Acts 14:17; 17:24 ff.; Rom. 1:19 f.; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:10 ff.; 2 Cor. 1:12; Col. 1:13ff.; 2:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 1:1f.; 4:12; 11:1-12:2; 2 Pet. 1:21.

It may be replied that such a statement is no evidence that what we believe is true; that it may only be a comforting illusion. We answer that the testimony of what is held to be the revelation of God to those who have received it and who live by it does carry its own guarantee of truth. We know

of this chapter. The difficulty of the themes and the rather compact treatment may make them hard for the beginner, especially if he is reading them without the help of a teacher. I suggest that the sections be read now so as to give a general idea of their content and that the student return to them at a later stage, after reading the whole book, when he will find that they convey more meaning. He will find that from Chapter II onwards the style and substance are less difficult.

## 2. THE GROUNDS OF BELIEF

We have seen that belief in God calls for much more than argument designed to prove that He exists. Argument may have some value in helping us to see and to testify that the grounds of our belief are reasonable. But we must never think that human reason is an instrument to discover the truth about God. It is at most a means to receive and test the given evidence. We must never ask the mind to do what is beyond its own power. It is best to begin by asking why, in fact, we do believe in God. It is certain that others will ask us this question. It is no good repeating the arguments of other believers. We must show what are the reasons which have persuaded us to put our trust in God.

Most Christians would probably say that they have something of God from the beauty and order of nature; more from the lives and words of good and believing men and women with whom they have come into contact in home, school and church and who have imparted something of their own belief; from the testimony of their own conscience; especially from their reading of the Bible with its massive witness to the living God; and most of all from Jesus. This brief summary can best be illustrated from the Bible itself e.g., 2 Sam. 12:1 ff.; 2 Kings 23:1 ff.; Ps. 19:29; 44:1; 99:6 ff.; Isa. 6:5; 40:26; John 1:14 ff.; 9:2ff.; 14:9; 16:12ff.; Acts 14:17; 17:24 ff.; Rom. 1:19 f.; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:10 ff.; 2 Cor. 1:12; Col. 1:13ff.; 2:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 1:1f.; 4:12; 11:1-12:2; 2 Pet. 1:21.

It may be replied that such a statement is no evidence that what we believe is true; that it may only be a comforting illusion. We answer that the testimony of what is held to be the revelation of God to those who have received it and live by it does carry its own guarantee of truth. We know

by experience. All our fundamental beliefs come so. Once we begin to argue about them we may find that they are much less certain than we thought. In fact, belief in God is no less reasonable than the many other beliefs on which we act confidently every day. We are not concerned to demonstrate the existence and nature of God, but to give reasons why we know He has made Himself known to us. God is not the conclusion of an argument but the subject of a testimony. Every believer can say that he is certain that he has religious experience. There are moments when he is aware of the presence of God not only outside but within himself. Should he be tempted to think that these experiences are illusions, he can recall the fact that many others, down the years, have had the same kind of experiences and speak the same kind of language. He cannot believe that all this is nothing but imagination, superstition and error. He thinks it reasonable to hold that this persistent experience is an experience of what is real i.e., he accepts the reality of experience; its witness has a genuine authority. It can and does help others to find to be true in their experience what we have found so in ours. All this points to the conclusion that God has so made man, for Himself, that there is in each man the capacity to recognize and respond to God. We are by nature believers; we argue ourselves into unbelief. We do not claim to know Him in whom we put our trust because we are clever, but because He has spoken and we have listened.

Dr. Vincent Taylor raises the question: By what authority do we believe? in order to point out that in a sense authority and belief are inconsistent. Belief, as in the great definition of Heb. 11:1; is venture, trust, a leap of the soul to grasp the unseen, relying for good reasons on what cannot be proven. To regard some external authority as final is to give assent to what is asserted. It is not belief in the New Testament sense. Here, concludes Dr. Taylor, 'authority is spiritual and there can be none greater.' We can believe only if we are free to believe. That is how Almighty God has made us in the wonder of His Grace. He has not seen fit to confront us with inescapable proofs, He challenges us to believe..... Had He given us infallible proofs, He would have treated us like slaves. He prefers sons, and sons must be free to rise



on wings of dauntless faith. We are supported adequately but not guaranteed. Like everything else in the Gospel even authority is of grace. It is a gift which does not degrade our nature but honours us as men'.

### 3. BIBLICAL CERTAINTY

It is often said that the Bible finds us in the deep places of our being and speaks to us with a certainty as does no other book. The more we read it the more persuasive is its authority. This is not by adding text to text but because through the printed word the Spirit of God speaks to us and enables us to see Jesus, who leads us to the Father. Nor do we forget that we receive the Bible from the Church and in its fellowship are enabled to read it. We are to consider the Bible not by itself but in the context of the three-fold witness of the Holy Spirit, the Church and the Word, which is the ground of our certainty. We may expect to learn from reverent reading of the Bible, through the Spirit and in the Church, all that is necessary for the saving knowledge of God. The Bible is pre-eminently the record of God's revelation of Himself. It tells what God has spoken to us through holy men of the past and especially through His Son. No doctrine of God is worthy of the name Christian which is not rooted and grounded in the Bible. Cf. Ps. 19:7ff.; 119; Dan. 6:10; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; Rom. 15:4; 16:25ff.; 1 Cor. 15:3f.; 2 Tim. 3:15ff.; 2 Pet. 1:19ff.

In the Bible God is : He who is. There is no concern for proofs of His existence but the witness of experience that He is and the proclamation that He can be known by what He does. On Him man depends; without Him he is nothing. To deny this is folly. Argument about God gives way to witness to God as acting in and on the world, revealing by His mercy and justice the nature of His holy will. Israel might obey or disobey but it could not plead ignorance and say that God was an unknown God who had spoken no word to manifest Himself to His People. The very fact that Israel regarded itself as the chosen race e.g., Deut 7:6ff., is evidence that God had revealed Himself. Thus the Old Testament is written round the conviction that God has given the knowledge of Himself to His people and chosen them to be

the means of extending the same to the world. Abraham leaves home and ventures into the unknown at the call of God. Moses learns that He is One who has personal interest in him and his fellows. The Prophets, with increasing knowledge of God's purpose, confront the People with new demands of righteousness. The Psalmists gather up the hopes and assurances of generations of believers. All this reaches a climax in Jesus who, born into the old faith, hands it on enlarged, corrected, transformed.

In the Bible the fact of God is fundamental because it implies so much and commits the believer to so much. To say: I believe in God, in the Biblical meaning of the words, is a solemn avowal with great results for every aspect of life. It requires the believer to be ready to obey; it enables him to look with confidence on a troubled world: it constrains him to share with others the knowledge, comfort and inspiration which he has himself received. This reminds us that the study of the doctrine of God is not merely of academic and personal interest.

It has been said that many of our fellow men today have 'a God-shaped blank in the soul'. The epigram points to a great truth. Men made to worship God have no God or what they call 'god' is not God. Some who profess to believe cannot say in whom they put their trust and their half-belief has little effect on life. In a world oppressed with doubts, denials, uncertainties the Christian is called to offer the great God-given certainty of the Bible; to communicate the Biblical spirit of worshipping belief; to share the knowledge of God which issues in right living. We may illustrate this by reference to two of the main areas of our evangelistic concern.

In the matter of knowledge of God, the Gospel confronts Hinduism at the deepest level. The idea of God which has had most influence on the life of the people of India is that of Brahman, the all-prevading absolute, the great unqualified and unqualifiable *It*. We can agree with the Hindu that God is Spirit and that there is a real sense in which He is present in the universe, but we cannot follow him when he goes on to say of every quality which we would ascribe to God: neti, neti—not so, not so. Dean Inge commented after hearing Tagore: 'It was a beautiful exposition of pure mystical doctrine, but I could not help feeling that there was no



concrete filling of the idea of Brahman. The Absolute may be perilously near to zero, if all determinations are denied to it. We do not think to confine God within the limits of human thinking for we acknowledge that He is unfathomable. Yet we do believe that He can be known. We are able to speak with reverent confidence about God because it has pleased Him to manifest Himself to men. In the Bible, God is always One who speaks and acts—in nature, in history, in human lives and, in the end, in His Son. From what He discloses of Himself we have the certainty that He who is source, goal, unity of all things is eternal goodness and love. This, as we shall consider later in detail, is the great truth about God in which all else is summed up. John Wesley claimed to be a man of one Book. From this he learned ‘that if God’s love can reach up to every star and down to every poor soul in earth, it must be vastly simple: so simple that all dwellers on earth may be assured of it; and so vast that they may inherit it without considering their deserts’.

The Christian is a debtor, also, to those who, without God in the world, put their faith in man’s ability to control and use the forces of nature. Events in our day, when man’s power to harness the forces of nature has out-run his power to use his inventions for good ends, show that this godless faith brings its own punishment. When men deny the eternal and divine authority over their lives they cannot agree what purpose to follow or how to follow it. If a man believes in an eternal goodness he knows that the means to achieve a purpose must be good. If his goods are merely temporal then any means will do. Once we give up belief in the rule of God we can justify any action so long as it gives us what we want. As Dr. Quick pointed out, it is possible to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles if there is no divine law which decrees that thorns and thistles must bear less desirable fruit. To take a particular instance—we Christians look for a good time coming no less than the Communists, but for us it means God’s Kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. We do not, as has been alleged, tolerate present evils and hope for Heaven in the future. As believers in the living God we cannot hasten the coming of His Kingdom by force and deceit, but we can enter it now by love. We have learned from Christ, who was the best

kind of revolutionary and who bids His disciples be reformers, that to believe in God is to enter into fellowship with the eternal will for goodness which gives meaning to the movements of history and orders them to their proper end, just because it is above the changes and chances of time.

The Biblical faith in God as One who reveals Himself as caring for men permits neither scepticism nor pride. The confidence of the believer is strong in the knowledge that his faith is centred not in his own thinking about God but in God Himself. The concern is never with what man thinks about God, but with God and what He thinks about, and does for, man. God is always first and any religious discoveries which man may make are only the human reading of divine revelation. This leads us to a further important truth.

In times of trouble men are apt to chide the Christian: Where is your God now? as if he were supposed to know the very mind of God and be able to account for everything that happens, and even to guarantee that it will happen favourably to human desires. We must confess that even some believers think like this and regard their information about God as complete. There are some theologians who seem ready to define the nature of God with a detail and precision from which an honest scientist would shrink in defining an insect. We do know something about God—because the Bible tells us so—and what we know counts for much. But we do not know all, and what we do know does not account for everything. Even for Jesus, in the days of His flesh, the day of God's Kingdom was hidden and, in the garden, there was momentary doubt as to God's will for Himself.

It is good to recognize that there are limits to our understanding; that the glory of Him whom we worship is above our explanations. It is good that man should be baffled in his search for God; and, when God declares Himself, be humbled and awed before Him. Never let us forget that, in the Bible, the stress is never on man's capacity to reach God, but always on God's willingness to make Himself known. It is not that man is one who has power to reach God, but that God is such that He will not keep apart from man.

A famous poem declares: God's in His Heaven; all's right

with the world! The truth would seem to be the exact opposite. All is very much wrong with the world; so God came down from heaven. We have nothing greater to tell our fellow men than that in this great loving action we can learn who God is.

- A. S. Peake: *The Bible, its Origin, Significance, and Abiding Worth*
- H. E. Fosdick: *The Modern Use of the Bible*
- A. Richardson: *Preface to Bible Study*
- H. H. Rowley: *The Relevance of the Bible; The Unity of the Bible*
- C. H. Dodd: *The Bible Today*
- H. Cunliffe-Jones: *The Authority of the Biblical Revelation*
- G. E. Wright and R. Fuller: *The Book of the Acts of God*
- J. J. Von Allmen: *Vocabulary of the Bible*
- O. Weber: *Ground plan of the Bible*
- J. D. Wood: *Interpretation of the Bible*
- E. C. Blachman: *Biblical Interpretation*
- D. Baly: *The Geography of the Bible*

#### 4. I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD

Many who believe that God is One have so learned the futility of thinking that there can be more than one God as to argue that the very word God implies 'only'. We in India, however, cannot take this great truth for granted. There are many round us for whom this knowledge is new and emancipating truth. What most appeals in Christianity to many new converts is the fact that now they have to do with one God only, and He is good. It helps to keep the Old Testament in its proper place in the worship of the Indian Church to remember that this certainty, as handed down in the record of divine revelation, is the great gift of Old Israel to the world.

The Prophets, to whom the revelation was given, never argued about whether there are many gods or one God. It was their experience of God's action in their lives, and that of the nation, which compelled them to declare that He is One and there can be none other. He showed them so clearly the difference between Himself and the so-called gods of other nations that they realized that these were not gods at all. There was nothing characteristic about any of them. From the Prophets we can learn much as to how to confront the many gods of Hinduism, cf. Exod. 20:3; Deut. 4:39; 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 45:5; Zech. 14:9.

The monotheism of the Old Testament is woven into the fabric of the New Testament, which takes it over without question, e.g., Matt. 23:9; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4ff.; Eph. 4:6. The Christian believes in One God and knows that not so to believe leads to results which are impossible for reason and conscience alike. He is certain that behind all things is one eternal will of goodness. We can speak of a universe just because above the things of time and change stands the one living God who is in the beginning and in the end. This axiom of faith is not the product of human speculation but the gift of God's own self-revelation.

The knowledge that God is One and living is at the heart of the whole Biblical record of His dealings with men. The creation of the world is His act. He has a saving purpose for what He has made and to this end He is active in history. He is source both of the order of nature and of the moral law, Ps. 19. He is not, however, the mere principle of the universe but at once over it and ever active in it. He controls its course by the regular sequences of cause and effect which we call the laws of nature, but He is always free to intervene to shape events. He is Lord above the struggles of a world confused by sin but He does not dwell apart in everlasting calm. He who inhabits the high and holy place comes to dwell in the man of humble and contrite spirit. In the fulness of time He sends His Son to redeem the world. The monotheism of the Bible has nothing in common with any doctrine of the divine static perfection abiding forever in lonely blessedness.

The One Living God is ever at work to reveal His purpose to the world, and to bring it to pass. He gives Himself to the men whom He has made and who trust and obey Him. He gives the power to hear and the grace to submit so as to enable them to respond. He is First and Last not in the sense that creation emanates from Him and is to be absorbed into Him, but that in His grace, He continually offers help to those whom He has made in His Image that they may become what they are, in fellowship with Him.

Again we stress that this self-revelation is God's own act and only with His help can we know that it is revelation. Apart from what God does, man can discover nothing about Him. But, having received what God offers, the Christian

is not content to say that he believes that God is One but that he believes in One God. It is not a matter of an affirmation of the mind but a movement of the whole person; a relationship between the loving God and the beloved creature.

## 5. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

The Biblical doctrine of the One Living God is summed up in the Creed whereby we confess our faith in the One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in God as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. These are the great words we are to study and seek to understand. Before going on to do so we should note two important points:

(i) The words used in the Creed are for the most part fairly common in the religions of the world. It has been suggested that they might be used as the basis of some common world faith. It is important to see that the same word does not necessarily convey the same idea, e.g., 'Father' is used of God in Christianity and in Islam but the doctrine taught is very different.

(ii) The Creed is a unity in which each part controls the meaning of the others. We must not take the clauses in isolation from each other. Thus all that is said in the first clause about God the Father is determined by what is said in the second clause about God the Son in whom the great revelation came. This applies to all our study but it is of particular relevance to the present stage, as in this volume, where it has helped to determine the method and plan.

In what has been said already stress has been laid on the importance of the revelation of God in the Old Testament. Yet we shall not look here for the full Christian doctrine of God. We shall see how remarkable are the fore-shadowings of the larger truth which was to come by Jesus. The Prophets proclaimed One who shows His love by meeting men's needs and is ready to save all who put their trust in Him e.g., Isa. 40:27ff.; 43:1 ff., 49:6; Hos. 11:1 ff. The same faith runs through the Psalter, e.g., Ps. 23; 27; 31; 46; 91; 121; 147. Of such a God Paul spoke to the Athenians, Acts 17:22 ff. Towards the end of his address, however, Paul adds *but now* (v. 30) bringing in a new factor. He had facts

unknown to any Prophet or Psalmist. God had sent His own Son to live on earth and die and rise again, that men might become sons of God indeed. It is the light of this knowledge that Paul breaks into the rapturous cry of Rom. 8:28 ff. He did not think of the love of God as something simply to be taken for granted. The love of God which really mattered, and of which he could be sure, was the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. cf. Matt. 11:25 ff.; Luke 2:25 ff.; John 3:16; 35 f., 6:40; 8:31 ff.; 14:7 ff.; 16:27 ff.; 17:24; 20:31; Rom. 5:8 ff.; 2 Cor. 1:3; 4:6; 5:19; Eph. 1:3; 2:13; 1 John 3:5 ff.; 4:7 ff.

This is the faith which, in a fulness unknown elsewhere, we confess when we say the Creed. Since it is the Christian faith it is well to let Christ Himself interpret it to us. He comes to us from the bosom of the Father, not to argue about the existence of God, but to make Him known to us and to assure us that He is One who cares for us, e.g., Luke 10:22; 12:28 ff. We shall continue our study on the understanding that the Christian doctrine of God rests upon the supreme and final revelation of Himself which He has given in Jesus Christ.

Christian teaching has always been controlled by the conviction that Jesus has shown mankind who God is. In a world which believes in some kind of a god, or none, stand these who know that the one true God sent His Son into the world to assure it of what kind of a being He really is. We cannot even begin to try to define God. If we are bold to say what He means for us it is only because of what He has told us of Himself, and this supremely in Christ. We begin with Christ and in His light see God. The God whom we worship in Christ through the Holy Spirit is not simply a god but God, not a common noun but a proper name. He is the One Being who is unlike any other. It is Christ who gives us this definite idea of God. We begin by learning what Christ teaches and reveals and commit ourselves to the position that nothing can be true of God which Christ does not allow.

The Creed opens with the statement that Almighty God is Father. This, many do not find it easy to believe, if it implies a God who loves and cares. The Creed goes on to give the supreme, perhaps the only, reason for believing that



this is true, in the record of One named Jesus and the meaning given to it. It is from Him that we learn to call the Almighty Creator, Our Father. He determines the meaning these words shall bear. Those who would know God as *Father* must first believe in Jesus His Son. When we say that this word sums up all we have to say of God we do so on the evidence of the life, experience and teaching of Jesus and through faith in His divine Sonship. We believe in God the Father because Christ has shown Him to be such and we interpret the words Almighty and Creator only in the sense which Jesus allows.

For this reason this book begins as does the Apostolic Benediction, 2 Cor. 13:14, with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we emphasize the fact that the Christian doctrine of God derives from His own self-revelation in Christ. We begin with the divine grace disclosed in Jesus, Christ and Lord, through the Holy Spirit whom He sent to lead us into the truth, and then go on to the love of the Father which has its only real justification in the knowledge that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

This order and method is particularly apt for the Christian in India. We have noted the power of Hinduism to absorb truth but it has never been able to absorb Jesus the Christ for He is the revelation of God in history. Ideas can be assimilated; historic facts cannot. Hinduism is a religion of ideas but Christianity is built upon a person who lived and died and rose again. We must stand firm on this intractable fact of God in Christ for this is the foundation of our belief in God.

We are not, by this method of study, changing Theology into Christology; offering Jesus instead of the Father. All Christian doctrine is the doctrine of God. The account of Jesus in the Creed arises out of the primary believing experience, grounded in facts, that in Christ God had become real. The revelation in Christ provides content for the meaning we give to the word God, and assurance for the belief that God is love.

What is set out in the Creed has been continuously confirmed in the life of the Church. All down the years, Christians believe, and have verified the belief in experience, that in the fellowship of the disciples of Christ there is at work

a power which enables them to live according to the standard governing all their relationships; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. They learn that this power is the Spirit of Christ; that without it they cannot overcome the self-centredness which ruins life; and that it works most powerfully as they seek fellowship with Him. So they study what is recorded about Him in the Gospels. They find that this record is not merely an event in history but the final revelation of what God is like and of the eternal purpose of good which He is working out in history. They find that what they read in the Gospels is the consummation of the redeeming work of God which is recorded in the whole Bible. This offers an intelligible and coherent view of life which they try to work out in thought and conduct. For this the inspiration and power is found in the worship of God in Christ and in obedience to his first commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

A. M. Hunter: *Introducing New Testament Theology*

A. Richardson: *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*

## 6. A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

It may help the student to set out at this point a brief statement of the general position which the following chapters are intended to support. I have not attempted to rewrite the Creed in longer and up-to-date terms. I have reproduced what was written, during the Second World War, by a group of Christians, in the hope that it might provide a basis on which Christians of different communions could co-operate. It seems to me of much value as a means to hold together the various doctrines which we are now to consider, one by one, in detail.

We believe that the world exists by the righteous will of the living God; that He is the one creator and ruler of all things; that this present world is the sphere in which His eternal purpose of love is being wrought out; that men have to do with Him, their only true life being a right relation to Him in obedience and trust, and to one another in love;



that He makes men free, personal beings able to choose good or evil; that man tends from birth to be self-centred and prone to choose evil, and that his self-centredness becomes a curse from which he cannot by his own effort set himself free; that in this historical process which has gone wrong God Himself is nevertheless personally at work; the creator is also the redeemer.

*We believe* that God took hold of human history and individual human lives in a new way in the great act of the Incarnation; that the birth and life, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is nothing less than God's own redeeming presence and purpose actively manifested in historic time; that in Him God the Son became man, perfectly human yet without sin or self-centredness; that He lived among men disclosing in a human life that holy love which is God's nature, and that perfect filial relationship to the Father which is man's true nature; that His death on the Cross makes plain forever the meaning and measure of man's sin as rebellion against God; that sin there wrote its own condemnation indelibly on the pages of history and was judged with absolute finality; that by bearing the full burden of its evil consequences the divine redeemer showed not only the cost of our sin to God, but also, and in the same act, the eternal love of God which is willing to bear that cost; thereby He declared God's forgiveness to those who repent and believe; that is, to those who give up their selfish outlook and receive the forgiveness which God freely offers. We believe that God set His seal upon this life and death of perfect obedience and perfect love by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, establishing within the corporate life of sinful humanity a creative centre of righteousness, and making altogether new spiritual possibilities for men living in this world.

*We believe* that God by His Holy Spirit makes the redeeming work of Christ available to all men; that by thus living and dying and rising from the dead Christ has become the means by which the Spirit of the living God exercises a new power over their hearts and wills; that God who as Spirit is ever active among men—speaking to them in all ages through their consciences and most specially through the prophets of Israel—is now known in all His fulness only in the experience of those whose hearts are open to His love in

Christ i.e., those who are brought into the movement of God's new creative work in history which is the fellowship of Christ's disciples and is called the Church. Further, we believe that though God's redeeming action embraces all humanity and will not disclose its full meaning until its victory is universal, the high ends of His Kingdom are nevertheless realized sacramentally here and now and made visible in the life of the Church. Thus this present world, in spite of all its evil, is nevertheless a redeemed order, and man's highest life both here and hereafter lies in the redeemed society whose life is even now 'hid with Christ in God'.

*We believe* that the Kingdom of Heaven which Christ proclaimed and embodied will be known in its perfection only in the eternal life of which our life here is a preparatory portion, but that it is our duty to live here and now as citizens of that Kingdom; that God is at work in the world to ends which must of necessity transcend this world and all human experience here, but that we are called to work with Him in obedience, trust and love for the realization of His purpose on earth. This means that we must first seek God's Kingdom and His justice, not our own interest or comfort, and try to make love of our neighbour the rule of all our actions. This we can do effectively only as we live within the redeemed order, realizing that this world of sin and death is still God's world and that our fellow man is always the 'brother for whom Christ died'. In short, the creative centre of our effective moral action is the redeeming act of God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

*Note:* Books recommended for consultation on points of detail are:

- (a) H. H. Farmer: *Towards Belief in God*\*  
 John Baillie: *Our Knowledge of God*  
 Charles Gore: *Belief in God*  
 H. R. Mackintosh: *The Christian Apprehension of God*  
 H. M. Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*  
 W. R. Matthews: *Our Faith in God*\*  
 Theodore Woods: *What is God like?*\*  
 W. Nicholls: *Revelation in Christ*\*
- (b) A. Richardson: *Christian Apologetics*  
 F. R. Tennant: *The Nature of Belief*  
 T. C. Hammond: *Reasoning Faith*\*

A. E. Taylor: *Does God Exist?*

John Baillie (Ed.): *Revelation\**

John Baillie (Ed.): *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*

T. A. Roberts: *History and Christian Apologetics*

L. Hodgson: *For Faith and Freedom*

G. F. Woods: *Theological Explanation*

A. Macintyre: *Difficulties in Christian Belief*

I. T. Ramsey: *Religious Language*

(c) C. C. J. Webb: *Religious Experience*

J. B. Pratt: *The Religious Consciousness*

W. B. Selbie: *The Psychology of Religion\**

H. D. Lewis: *Our Experience of God*

(d) E. Lewis: *The Philosophy of the Christian Revelation\**

A. S. Pringle Pattison: *The Idea of God*

W. R. Sorley: *Moral Values and the Idea of God*

A. E. Taylor: *The Faith of a Moralist*

F. R. Tennant: *Philosophical Theology*

W. Temple: *Nature, Man and God*

G. Macgregor: *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*

A. A. Vogel: *Reality, Reason and Religion*

A. M. Farrer: *The Freedom of the Will*

J. Collins: *God in Modern Philosophy*

D. E. Trueblood: *Philosophy of Religion*

H. D. Lewis: *Morals and Revelation*

(e) C. E. Raven: *Science, Religion and the Future\**

C. A. Coulson: *Christianity in an Age of Science\**

C. A. Coulson: *Science, Technology and the Christian\**

R. E. D. Clark: *Christian Belief and Science\**

W. A. Whitehouse: *Christian Faith and the Scientific Attitude*

C. E. Raven: *Natural Religions and Christian Theology*

\* Simpler books more suitable for the teacher of students at L. Th. level.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PERSON OF CHRIST

#### 1. THE METHOD OF APPROACH

CHRISTIANITY is distinguished among the religions of the world by the place it gives to its Founder. From the beginning Christians have worshipped Jesus as Lord and have named Him Christ and Son of God. In this day have been in harmony with His own mind. The belief that He is not merely the Prophet but is Himself essentially one with God and that through Him, and none other, God's redeeming purpose is fulfilled, gives to the Christian doctrine of God its special content and spiritual power.

The fact that Jesus Christ has His place in Christianity both as Founder and Foundation means that we are concerned not merely with His teaching but with His person. If He had contributed to religion only a body of teaching its value could be tested by its intrinsic quality independent of any theory about or belief in the teacher. The teaching would remain and its quality be unimpaired irrespective of any questions as to His life and character, as in the case of e.g., Krishna and Buddha. The Christian religion, however, includes such devotion to His person that faith in Jesus determines faith in God. Therefore who He is and what He did are matters of supreme importance.

A. C. Headlam: *Jesus Christ in History and Faith*

P. T. Forsyth: *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*

The Christian attitude to the Founder raises many problems. These we are to consider. How, for example, are we to reconcile our belief that He is eternal and divine with our conviction that He lived for thirty-three years on earth as a man among men? Let it be said at the outset that there is no need to hesitate to worship Him as Lord until we have solved the problems which perplex the mind. This has never been so; indeed, the history of the Church shows that it is only in the spirit of worship that justice can be done to all the facts and their significance understood.

Many have preferred to approach the problems through philosophy. The doctrine of Christ is regarded as part of a coherent view of the universe in which God, man and incarnation have their place in an ordered system. The great problem is to understand the union of divine and human in the one person of Christ. This approach is characteristic of the period of the General Councils, 4th to 8th centuries, when the Church presupposed the doctrine expressed in the Creeds and sought to define the two natures in Christ in terms of the current philosophy of nature and substance. Unhappily, as we shall see, Christian thinking was complicated by certain preconceptions concerning the being of God derived from Greek philosophy and did not stand firmly on the Gospel facts.

Whether we start from the worship of the Church or from the ideas of philosophy we must sooner or later take history into consideration and look at the Jesus of the Gospel. The present writer believes that this cannot be soon enough. He has chosen, therefore, to begin with the facts disclosed in the record of Jesus. This is not to rule out other ways—for in the end all approaches are needed—but to make the Gospels the touchstone of doctrine. Any doctrine of Christ stands or falls by its success or failure in accounting for and explaining, so far as words can, the Gospel story. We must ask, of any account we offer: Is the Jesus of History recognizable herein? With this is bound up the experience of men redeemed by Him. Is the doctrine we preach sufficient to account for the experience presupposed in the New Testament and in the continuing worship of the Church?

This method of study involves two assumptions: the historicity of Jesus and the trustworthiness of the Gospel narratives. These are not baseless assumptions. Behind them is a great weight of evidence ruling out any suggestion that Jesus may never have lived or that, if He did, we can know little or nothing about Him. We can start with the assurance that Christ did live on earth and that the life He lived is substantially that recorded by the four Evangelists.

On the other hand, this method does not imply any distinction between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith. There is no reason to sever, even in imagination, the Jesus recorded in the Gospels from the Lord set forth in the Epistles.

To make any such distinction is to leave the Christ of Faith a mere effect of some vague unknown cause. If the hold of faith on fact is weakened and its content simply inferred from experience, Christianity is reduced to mysticism or to the ethics of Jesus. We need to stress, especially in India, that the Christian religion is bound up with the Christian story. Faith and history belong together and mutually sustain each other. The facts confirm the faith, and the content of the faith confirms the credibility of the history.

J. Martin: *The Reliability of the Gospels*

H. G. Wood: *Did Christ really live?*

H. G. Wood: *Jesus in the Twentieth Century*

J. M. Robinson: *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*

P. Althaus: *The So-called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus*

R. Bultman: *Jesus Christ and Mythology*

J. Macquarrie: *The Scope of Demythologizing*

E. Stauffer: *Jesus and His Story*

H. E. W. Turner: *Jesus, Master and Lord*

Jesus was not engaged in acting or stating a doctrine but in living a life. The Church has always believed this life to be the incarnate life of One who is both divine and human. This is the Catholic faith set out in the Creeds. But Creeds have two elements in the clauses concerning Christ. There is an historical record which outlines the life of Jesus by its main events. It shows Him to be truly, and uniquely, human. It raises the question: Who say ye that I am? There is also an interpretation which explains the facts by saying that Jesus Christ is Son of God and Lord. The Apostles' Creed leaves it at that, but in the Nicene Creed the significance of these terms is made explicit by the addition of a number of clauses. It is our business in what follows to review the facts and seek to understand the explanation that we may see Jesus and preach Him as Christ and Lord.

*Note.* Reference will be made, at suitable points, to many books which can help our study. It is convenient here to mention those which cover the theme as a whole. Two books stand out and have stood the test of time. H. R. Mackintosh: *The Person of Christ*, R. L. Ottley: *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*. There are some simpler books which can be read as a whole to supplement this chapter, e.g., S. Cave: *What shall we say of Christ?*; *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*; J. K. Mozley: *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*.

Other general studies to which reference may be made include:

L. W. Grensted: *The Person of Christ*

H. Hodgson: *And was made man*

E. L. Strong: *The Incarnation of God*

W. N. Pittinger: *The Word Incarnate*

K. Heim: *Jesus the Lord*

L. S. Thornton: *The Incarnate Lord*

A. E. J. Rawlinson (Ed.): *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*

## 2. THE MESSIANIC HOPE

*Jesus Christ is Lord.* By saying that, we bring theology and history together. We give to our faith a definite origin in time and space. Here is a Jewish name and a Jewish title. Our Lord once lived as a Jew; our religion began as a movement in Judaism. Even the Fourth Gospel, written to show Jesus to the Greeks, says that salvation is from the Jews. The facts about Jesus on which we build our faith are not bare facts; they happen in the context of Judaism. We are not free to ignore the Jewish background and, in particular, that belief in the living God which is the great gift of Judaism to the world. This is the great presupposition of the Gospel which has always lost power when theologians have gone astray and hidden the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob in the ideas of philosophy. The early Church learned that to cut the Gospel from its Old Testament foundation, and to try and fit it into some pattern of thought from other sources, was to reduce it to some abstract theosophy. We have still to learn this lesson.

The teaching of the Old Testament provides some striking contrasts with that of the Greek world. Its theology is dominated by the belief that God guides history. He is an active God who has all events under His control. History is the story of His mighty acts to fulfil His redeeming purpose. But in Greek philosophy all events and things are only symbols of the divine reality which shines through them, more or less. God is eternal, changeless perfection and is revealed as such to those who know how to look behind the things of this world which hide the vision. Thus, in the Old Testament to know God is to hear and obey His Word. The religious leader is the prophet who listens and declares: Thus saith the Lord. But for the Greek the way to know God was to pass beyond time and space to the clearer vision of the



reality behind; to see rather than to hear. It followed that, whereas for the Greek salvation meant a mystical union of the individual soul with the eternal divine reality away from the events of history; it is connected in the Old Testament with the fulfilment of God's promises for His People in a blessed age to come. These contrasts are important for us because the Greek view has much in common with the Hindu. The Hebrew sense of the world process as unique, and marked by unique events of supreme spiritual importance, is fundamental to the Biblical view of life. We can understand how new and liberating was a teaching which told men, who saw history as endless repetition leading nowhere, that it was a process leading to a great goal i.e., 'eschatological'.

From this distinctive attitude of the Old Testament to history, and to the divine purpose revealed therein, come certain principles to help Christians to understand the Gospel facts and to guard against false interpretations derived from ways of thinking which are foreign to the Bible. *Monotheism* is the fruit of the long Jewish experience of the living God. The *one and only* God revealed Himself to His People as personal and active. He is holy and sovereign Lord, having loving care for men, who are His creatures but not His toys and whom He longs to be His sons. *Eschatology*, expressed sometimes in visions of things to come, holds the conviction that history has purpose and meaning, leading up to the divine goal to which God is guiding all things in His love and wisdom. *Messianism*, embodying the sure hope of of a divinely appointed redeemer to come, expresses the belief that God is no mere spectator of human history but the decisive participator in it. With the first two of these principles we deal in detail elsewhere cf. I § 4; IV § 1; and Vol. II Chap. VI. We are here concerned mainly with the third because we call Jesus *the Christ*, and so declare that He has fulfilled God's promises, made to mankind through the Hebrew people, that a king would come to reign in righteousness and peace. Cf. Isaiah 9:6 f.; 11:1 ff.; 61:1 ff.; Luke 4:16 ff.; Mark 8:27 ff.; 14:53-15:32; John 18:33 ff.

Thus, to name Jesus *the Christ* is to bring history into our argument in a clear and definite way, for the word has a particular historical origin and significance. If we are to know what 'Christ' ought to mean for us in India today we must



learn, as the Gentiles had to learn, what it once meant in Palestine. When the Creed affirms that Jesus is the Christ it draws not only on the New Testament facts but on what men believed before Jesus came, and especially on the *Messianic Hope* which grew out of the conviction that a blessed age must come for the Israel of God.

Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. It means simply 'the anointed one', but it expresses a great idea of Jewish theology, which is of first importance for the understanding of the religion in which the hope came to fulfilment. The Jews never had one clear or generally accepted doctrine of the person and work of the Messiah. The following examples illustrate the wide variety of usage:

- (a) *Kings and Priests*: I Sam. 10:1, 16:13; 1 Kings 1:34; 2 Kings 11:12; Ps. 20:6; Lam. 4:20; Exod. 28:41; Ps. 133:2; Dan. 9:24 ff.; 2 Macc. 1:10; 1 Kings 19:16.
- (b) *Agents of Yahweh's will*: Isa. 45:1, 61:1; Ps. 105:15, 84:9.
- (c) *Restoration of Israel*: Isa. 2:1 ff.; Mic. 4:1 ff.
- (d) *David*: 2 Sam. 7:8 ff.; 1 Kings 9:1 ff.
- (e) *Deliverer*: Isa. 11:1 ff. Hos. 3:5; Jer. 17:25; Rzek. 34: 24 f.; Isa. 55:3; Zech. 12: 10; Isa. 7:14 f., 9:5 f.; Zech. 3:8, 6:12, 9:9 ff.; Hag. 2:23; Mic. 5:2; Jer. 33:15; Ps. 89:20 ff., 18:50, 132, 110, 2, 72.
- (f) *Glories of Messianic age*: Zech. 8, 14, f; Tobit 13.
- (g) *Supernatural Intervention*: Similitudes of Enoch 46:1 ff., 48:10, 52:4, 53:6.
- (h) *Conquest of gentiles*: Psalms of Solomon 17:23 ff.

*N.B.* References from apocryphal books have been included because there were important developments in the idea during the inter-testamental era.

Broadly speaking we can say, however, that from early days Israel believed that the coming of Messiah would mean the inauguration of God's full and final rule over His world. Whether he was thought of as mortal man or as super-man, as a greater David or the perfect High Priest, as the Prophet like Moses or as a better Ezra, all pointed to the expectation that Messiah would achieve the whole will of God. Although little was said as to his relation to the being of God, it was accepted that his work in history would be divine and saving action according to God's purpose. When Jesus came, there

was a general belief among the Jews that the divinely appointed redeemer was about to appear. Still there was no single orthodox doctrine, but the various ideas tended to converge on three main points: (1) Though appointed by God, Messiah was not personally divine. (2) His main work was to deliver Israel from oppression into righteousness, peace and prosperity (3) His coming meant the miraculous intervention of God and the inauguration of a new order. A good summary of the Messianic Hope held by the pious Jews of the time is in the *Benedictus*, Luke 1:68 ff. Uttered at the moment when hope passed into fulfilment, the hymn gathers up those three emphases which we noted above (p. 22 f.) as distinctive of Old Testament theology.

Gregory Dix: *Jew and Greek*.

G. H. C. Macgregor and A. C. Purdy: *Jew and Greek, Tutors unto Christ*.

T. Boman: *Hebrew Thought compared with Greek*.

The interpretation of Messianic prophecy as a whole presents a problem. There are some who regard prophecy as history written in advance and who trace the exact anticipation of Jesus' life in certain isolated verses e.g., Isa. 53:9; Zech. 12:10; Ps. 22:18; Hos. 11:1. At the other extreme are those who regard the whole idea of Messiah as a Christian invention. It is our task first to study what the Old Testament says about the Lord's Anointed and then to look at Jesus. To hold that there was a Messianic Hope before Messiah came does not necessarily require us to think that the Prophets wrote with full conscious knowledge of what was to come. Yet there is a great fact in history: a hope and a fulfilment.

(i) A nation grows up believing in a divine mission and a great future. Isa. 44:1 f.; Zeph. 3; Zech. 3; Gen. 12:1 ff., 18:18; Isa. 60; Mic. 4:2 f. The hope is associated with a Messiah, related especially to the house of David, 2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:35 f.; Amos. 9:11 ff.; Hos. 3:4 f.; Jer. 17:25, 22:4, 33:15 ff. An ideal king is looked for through whom Israel's destiny will be fulfilled, Mic. 4:5; Isa. 7:14 ff., 9:6 f., 11. He is to reign in God's name and by his appointment. Ps. 2, 72, 110 represent the later and higher developments of a hope which encouraged Israel in times of trouble. There

were some who, through the tendency to narrow exclusiveness, failed to reach the heights of the idea, especially as regards other nations and the mission thereto. In the period between the Testaments the hope took two forms. The one looked for a supernatural Messiah to come from Heaven to establish God's rule and sit in judgement. e.g., Similitudes of Enoch c. 100 B.C. The other expected an earthly king to sit on David's throne, ruling righteously and bringing, honour to Jerusalem e.g., Psalms of Solomon c. 50 B.C. At the time of Jesus there was a general expectation, rooted in Scripture and interpreted variously according to the spiritual understanding. For most Jews it included three main ideas: (a) Establishment of the Kingdom of God. (b) Association of this either with a Davidic king or with a heavenly Son of Man coming down with power to end the present age. (c) Reference to the Gentiles either for their destruction or their salvation. The Jewish doctrine, however, did not relate to Messiah the fulfilment of Deut. 18:15 or Isa. 53. There was little thought of him as fulfilling the priestly ideal of the Old Testament and none at all that he would be a sacrifice for sin.

(ii) The long expectation is met by one who fulfils, all the truest ideals of the Old Testament. We shall consider later how Jesus claimed to be Messiah, and that in His coming was the decisive event revealing the meaning of God's activity in history. Here we note simply that as one knowing the thoughts and intentions of the Father, He so interpreted the prophetic writings as to separate the Word of God from its temporal and national context. Of contemporary ideas, some He accepted; others He transformed or rejected; and He added something of His own, thus reforming, enlarging and deepening the meaning of 'Messiah'. In thus fulfilling the hope, Jesus did more than literally accomplish particular predictions, yet there is a real correspondence between Messianic prophecy and its fulfilment. When we come to examine the titles claimed by, and used of, Jesus, we shall see how completely they meet the Old Testament hope, and beyond human expectation. It is impossible that any Jew could have pictured Messiah as He was; is it equally impossible to imagine any other who could have satisfied all his needs.

It is a mistake, as Sanday wrote, 'to suppose that the prophets who prophesied of the Messiah had definitely before

them the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and His life in Galilee and Judaea, and His death on Calvary. What they saw was something arising out of, suggested by, the circumstances of their own time, an ideal figure projected into the future..... No one of the figures thus imagined adequately corresponds to the real birth and life and death of Christ. They need to be combined and a key by which to combine them has to be sought. How are we to bring together these two parallel lines of prophecy which exist side by side in the Old Testament but nowhere meet; the ideal king, the descendant of David, and the ideal prophet, the Suffering Servant of Jehovah?..... We turn the pages which separate the New Testament from the Old. We look at the figure which is delineated there, and we find in it a marvellous meeting of traits derived from the most different and distant sources, from Nathan, from Amos, from Isaiah, from Zechariah, from Daniel, from Psalms, 2, 22, 69, 110. And these traits do not meet as we might expect them to do in some laboured and artificial compound, but in the sweet and gracious figure of Jesus of Nazareth—King but not as men count kingship; crowned but with the crown of thorns; suffering for our redemption but suffering only that He may reign'. (*Inspiration* 242 f.).

It is in this sequence of a real hope followed by the true fulfilment that we see God's saving purpose. We do not prove the doctrine of the Incarnation from prophecy, rather is the fact of the Incarnation the clue to the understanding of the Old Testament. Jesus as the Christ enables us to see the meaning of prophecy as it works out in the whole series of events, in the providence of God.

H. F. Hamilton: *The People of God*.

W. Sanday: *Inspiration*.

A. Nairne: *The Faith of the Old Testament*.

H. H. Rowley: *The Faith of Israel*.

Emmett's Article *Messiah* in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*  
Fairweather's Article *Messianic Hope* in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*—Vol. V 295 ff.

Oesterley: *Evolution of the Messianic Idea* (espec. Chaps. 9, 14-16);  
*Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha* (espec. chaps. 6-7).

Walker: *Jesus and Jewish Teaching*, 129 ff.

S. Mowinckel: *He That Cometh*.

### 3. THE CREATIVE FACTS

#### 1. The True Manhood

We are now to consider the facts which create the faith that Jesus is *Christ, Son, Lord*. We begin with the fact that a man was born at Bethlehem, went about doing good, died, and rose again. He is the centre of the whole story of salvation. There are some who make great claims for his divine nature and work, but neglect His actual life and teaching. This is to refuse to accept the clearest revelation which God has given to men of His being and purpose. We ought to make up our minds at the outset never to make separation, even in thought, of the Jesus who lived on earth from the Lord we worship. We have noted that the Creed includes an outline of the life of Jesus in terms of its main events. The whole approach is historical and the reference is to the New Testament evidence. Here, explicitly in the Gospels and implicitly in the Epistles, is the account of a life actually lived on earth, recorded by men who knew the facts and had no concern but to present them truthfully, e.g., Matt. 1:21; 3:16f.; 27:22 ff.; 28:5 ff., Mark 16:6; Luke 2:4 ff.; 24:33 ff.; John 1:14; 3:13 ff.; Acts 2:22 ff.; 3:13 ff.; Rom. 1:2 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:3 ff.; 1 Pet. 2:22 ff.; 3:18.

This may be illustrated by the creedal statement that Jesus *descended into hell*. This, which some find difficult, is important testimony that the life was real and not fiction. Jesus had a genuinely human lot, being subject to all the infirmities of manhood, even to sharing what awaits men on the other side of death. Hell does not mean the place of the damned but the world of departed spirits i.e., Hades. The evidence for His descent thither is not of the same order as for the rest of the facts but the New Testament takes it for granted, as the universal belief of Christians, that Jesus suffered with man and for man the full experience of death, even to going to where the dead await the resurrection, e.g., Luke 23:43; Acts 2:31; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:9; Phil. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:18 ff.; 4:6; Rev. 1:18. The evidence of other early Christian writers shows how the Church regarded this fact that He truly died as giving the final assurance of His humanity. In so sharing human life to the full and 'sanctifying the

grave to be a bed of hope' Jesus has removed the gloom from thought about what happens at death.

The whole Gospel record tells of a life on earth which in its beginning, continuing and ending was fully and truly human. The reality of His manhood is set out not only in the Synoptic Gospels but also by John who appeals to the facts in order to repudiate any suggestion that the incarnate life was that of a phantom. As a man Jesus was born, grew, suffered, experienced emotion, needed food, sleep, friends, and died. In all respects He lived a human life like ours, sharing our work, our joy, our sorrow. His mind developed and His sense of vocation grew. He had to endure struggle and temptation. He resorted to prayer. He assumed an attitude of trust and dependence to the Father whose will it was His delight to obey, e.g., Matt. 4:1 ff.; Mark 4:38; 11:12; 13:32; Luke 2:51 f.; 3:23; 4:1 ff.; 7:13, 34; 22:28, 41 ff.; 23:4, 14, 22; John 4:34; 11:35; 19:5 and cf. Phil. 2:5 ff.; Heb. 2:16 ff.; 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22 ff.

We must not forget that Jesus was born at a particular time and that He shared the ideas, knowledge and background of His time and place. He used the words and thoughts of a Jew of the first century A.D. Nothing else would have been intelligible to His hearers. Hence, in His teaching He stressed the Kingdom of God which had a certain meaning for the people of His race. But how different was His interpretation from that of His contemporaries. He drew on Scripture and gave very simply the meaning He knew to be true, using especially Deuteronomy, Isaiah, the Psalms and Daniel. He acknowledges that there were limitations to His knowledge e.g., Mark 13:32. We should beware of coming to our study with a fixed idea of what Jesus ought to have known, but must study the Gospel record with an open mind. Jesus' knowledge was not that of all manner of facts but rather the ability to discern the divine meaning of the facts. There are some who are troubled because Jesus seems to have forgotten that Ahimelech was High Priest when David ate the shewbread, Mark 2:26. The Gospels show us greater things than this and help us to understand how there can be at once divine knowledge in a human mind and human ignorance in a divine mind. For a full discussion of the problem of the knowledge of Jesus, concluding with the view

that such limitations as may be found are not unfitting for the incarnate Lord, read Quick: *Doctrines of the Creed*, 162 ff.

'He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin.' The Gospels show Jesus as living His life under the sense of a great vocation. In the working out of this, temptations were inevitable. Yet John represents Him as being wholly obedient to the will of God and as claiming to be faultless, 8:29, 46. The other Gospels imply the same. He began His work by calling men to repent, Mark 1:15. He continually deepened the sense of sin in His disciples, Luke 5:8. Yet He was never conscious of such Himself and herein is different from all other saints and teachers. This is the more remarkable when we remember how He enlarged the meaning of sin and lived a life full of difficult situations in which some error might be expected. Yet He never shows contrition or prays for forgiveness but acts as one having perfect fellowship with God. He who so condemned hypocrisy and valued sincerity is surely what He claims to be, and appears to be; without sin. The verdict of the early Church confirms the view of the Gospels e.g., 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5.

Some think sinlessness is a negative term and prefer to speak of Jesus' perfect fidelity to His vocation. Both terms are needed to describe the manner in which He fulfilled His task and the inner perfection of nature He brought to it. Do we know too little of Him to regard His sinless perfection as proven? The Gospels, small as they are in bulk, display Jesus in testing situations which would reveal any hidden flaw. It has been suggested that Matt. 10:5; 14; Mark 5:13; 11:15; John 2:4 indicate faults in Him. These incidents must be read in the light of the whole life and ministry. In no case do they trouble His own conscience or mar His sense of obedience. We may justly maintain that the Gospels present us with One who in His own mind and in the impression made on others lived a sinless life. This does not mean that He is more than man but rather the only true man, for sin is an alien element in manhood according to God's purpose. Here we see the truly human goodness of one in whom the image of God was unmarred. For a discussion of Jesus' moral perfection see Quick: *op. cit.* 171 ff.



Jesus, then, was a man, with a truly human growth and experience in body and spirit. We may never do anything to secure His divinity which would mean denying or lessening His true and full humanity. Yet all that we can say about Him as prophet and teacher, sinless and good, does not exhaust the record. We must go on to consider that in His words and deeds there is much which exceeds human nature as we know it. He was real man, and also unique man.

*Note (a):* The humanity of Jesus is personal and individual. He is not simply 'man,' a being of abstract human nature but a man with a name and character of His own. Human nature has no existence apart from actual examples. Manhood can be rendered abstract in thought but it does not exist so. It has been common even in orthodox circles, down the ages, to ascribe to Jesus some impersonal human nature. Those who so think are trying to secure in Jesus a universal and inclusive manhood; to make Him, 'The Ideal Man'. The value in this idea can be secured otherwise and without the risk of what we now see to be error. The ideal example of what manhood ought to be, need not be impersonal. Indeed if it is to be typical and universal it must be individual. The Christian looks unto Jesus and sees, not some vague compound of qualities and virtues, but a loving and gracious person—The Man.

*Note (b):* There is some doubt whether it is possible to write a 'Life' of Jesus in the usual sense of the word e.g., A. Schweitzer: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Yet much has been written which throws light on Him who lived and died long ago. The study of books dealing with the Life and Teaching of Jesus is of great value.

Basil Matthews: *A Life of Jesus*.

Charles Gore: *Jesus of Nazareth*.

T. R. Glover: *The Jesus of History*.

A. G. Hogg: *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*.

W. R. Maltby: *The Significance of Jesus*.

Carnegie Simpson: *The Fact of Christ*.

A. C. Headlam: *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ*.

Charles Gore: *The Sermon on the Mount*.

C. H. Dodd: *The Parables of the Kingdom*.

W. Scopes: *The Parables of Jesus*.

J. Jeremias: *The Parables of Jesus*.

A. M. Hunter: *Interpreting the Parables*.

W. Barclay: *The Mind of Jesus*.

T. W. Manson: *The Sayings of Jesus; The Teaching of Jesus*.

D. L. Sayers: *The Man born to be King*.

W. Sanday: *Outlines of the Life of Christ*.

## (ii) The Unique Manhood

The Gospels present Jesus as a real and perfect man. They also record much about Him that does not fall simply in the category of manhood. His personality appeared to those who knew Him as something more than human. He made for Himself claims, explicit and implicit, which far exceeded those proper to a teacher or prophet. He had a relationship to God the Father different from that of other men. He had a spiritual power which revealed itself in His influence over men, His insight into their hearts, His authority over evil spirits, His healing of the sick, and an unparalleled control over the forces of nature. We shall not depart for a moment from the conclusion that Jesus was a man in the fullest sense of the word, but we shall recognize that there is very much in Him that exceeds ordinary human nature as we know it in all other men. The life of Jesus, like unto His brethren in so many respects, is also unlike. His manhood is real—and unique. This brings us near the heart of the matter, for the evidence presses us to the ancient dilemma which has much relevance to the preaching of the Gospel in India—*Jesus is either God or not a good man*. There are many in India who revere Him as saint and prophet. Are they willing to take Him at His own word? He makes or implies claims for Himself which far exceed what the best of men ought to say. As we consider these we cannot but face, for ourselves and others, a great question: Is this man mad or bad, or is He what He claims to be, and what His Church acknowledges Him to be—very God of very God?

F. J. A. Hort: *The Way, the Truth, the Life*.

First we consider the authority of Jesus. This concerns the manner of His teaching. Mark 1:22 ff.; and more. The Hindu has great admiration for the Sermon on the Mount. Has he ever considered the huge assumption that lies behind it? Here Jesus is laying down the conditions for seeing God and becoming His sons. To these who regarded the Law of Moses as eternal and divine He proclaims a new law. He offers something higher and better than the inadequate righteousness taught by the Prophets of old. He does this on His own authority—'I say unto you'. Behind what seems the simplest teaching lies a super-human authority. It comes

to a head in His claim to forgive sins. Others proclaimed that God forgives the penitent; Jesus has authority to do it, Mark 2:1 ff. It is no wonder that those who rejected this authority charged Him with blasphemy. For one who is only a man and a prophet, it is blasphemy. Moreover, He claims again and again to have the authority of the One to whom men should come, e.g., Matt. 11:25 ff. C. G. Montefiore, a Jew who went further than most in his veneration of Jesus as a prophet, wrote that the exclusiveness of this saying was painful. 'We can only hope Jesus never uttered it'. This illustrates the fact that to regard Jesus as merely a man, however great, is inconsistent with His own words.

Next we look at what the Gospels tell us of Jesus' *miraculous power*. We cannot disregard what they record as to His power over evil spirits, the forces of nature, bodily sickness, even death. Every source traced in the four Gospels makes general statements that Jesus worked miracles and gives typical examples e.g., Matt. 8:1 ff.; 9:18 ff.; 35; 12:22 ff.; 14:13 ff.; Mark 1:32 f.; 3:9 ff.; 6:56; 8:22 ff.; Luke 7:1 ff.; 9:1; John 2:1 ff.; 4:46 ff.; 9:11. By His miraculous power the crowds were attracted and many were won to faith. The only reason to eliminate miracles from the Gospels is the preconception that they cannot happen; do so and the narrative is torn to shreds.

The miracles of Jesus are never the acts of a mere wonder worker. There is always a moral or spiritual quality in them. They were performed to relieve a need or to teach a lesson. They are the kind of thing we would expect from Him whose whole personality is, as Aquinas said, 'the miracle of miracles'. We do not build our case for the divinity of Christ simply on the fact that He worked miracles. On the contrary we best understand the miracles in His light. Much that would be incredible of any ordinary person is credible when related of Him. His miracles are just what we would expect Him to do. They are without any extravagance or fantasy. None of them demand belief in the existence of any fact quite unknown to men or quite contrary to nature. How different are the miracles recorded in the apocryphal gospels which the Church rejected, e.g., the story of the boy Jesus making mud birds which, at the clap of his hands, fly away. The miracles of Jesus are supernatural but not unnatural. There

were some 'miracles' common in ancient records of holy men which Jesus did not perform.

Moreover, and looking forward to the end of our argument, if we believe that in Jesus God became man, the miracles are neither incredible nor unnatural but in harmony with the great event. From any point of view the Incarnation is a miracle. The miracles recorded in the Gospels are signs of the manifestation of the power of God.

In any case, whatever we make of the miracles which Jesus worked during His ministry we have to take account of the miraculous events with which His life began and ended. The Gospels narrate that this man who lived a truly human life had a birth, a rising from the dead, and a departing, which leave no doubt as to His supernatural character. We shall proceed, therefore, to consider His Birth of a Virgin Mother; His Resurrection; and His Ascension, with a brief account of the significance of each event.

J. S. Lawton: *Miracles and Revelation*.

C. S. Lewis: *Miracles*.

A. Richardson: *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels*.

C. H. Headlam: *The Miracles of the New Testament*.

#### (a) The Virgin Birth

The conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary was not through the act of a man but by the direct action of the Holy Spirit. His birth was something outside the range of ordinary human experience. The Scriptural evidence for the *Virgin Birth* is not large but it is sufficient. It was accepted as part of the general teaching of the Church but was not, at first, preached as an essential of the faith. The early Church was concerned with what Jesus was rather than how He came. In the nature of things this belief could not be demonstrated as could others, but from the beginning it was seen to harmonize with all the facts and Matt. 1:18 ff. and Luke 1:26 ff. were accepted as original parts of the two gospels. The stories are independent and they differ in some details but they are wholly in agreement as to the main point that Jesus' birth was miraculous. It was not relevant to the scheme of Mark and John to refer to the birth of Jesus. There is no other direct reference in the New Testament but there is nothing to deny the Virgin Birth and statements such as 1 Cor. 15:47

and Gal. 4:4 are at least consistent with the fact. It has been suggested that Mathew and Luke invented the story in order to show the fulfilment of prophecy as in Isa. 7:14. But this verse was only interpreted so after Jesus came. There was no expectation that Messiah would be born of a virgin. Attempts to find parallels to the Christian story in other religions have failed. It is significant, however, that all the stories of virgin birth found elsewhere refer to the coming of a Saviour. This testifies to the sense that for salvation God has to take special action.

There seems no good reason to deny the fact of the Virgin Birth. We know that it is very difficult for some sincere Christians who ask for liberty of opinion at this point but do not deny that Jesus is God and man. The points at issue are whether the fact is true or not; what is the significance of the doctrine?

We recognize that the New Testament doctrine of Christ is not based on the Virgin Birth and we must hold the apostolic faith in the apostolic way. We do not argue that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore He must have been born of a virgin. It is the faith in His divinity which makes the manner of His birth credible. The Virgin Birth is not a proof of the Incarnation but it is wholly fitting to so great a fact. A supernatural birth is in harmony with the supernatural mission of the One who represents human nature in a new way. The Christian conscience has always felt that the whole picture is appropriate to the Christian scheme. The Virgin Birth has its place in Christian doctrine as representing a new departure in humanity and in line with Jesus' sinlessness. It is abnormal, but it is not unreasonable as the beginning to a life which is wholly extraordinary. We may not understand it fully but, in the end, can we really accept the unique Sonship of Jesus without the Virgin Birth? The two hold together and support each other. The believer thinking of this fact and its implications for the co-operation of God and man in salvation, for the union of natural and supernatural, will see it to be the only way in which God and man could be held together in the one Person of Jesus Christ.

G. H. Box: *The Virgin Birth of Jesus.*

Schmiedel: *Article on Mary in Encyclopaedia Biblica.*

O. C. Quick: *Doctrines of the Creed*, 156 ff.

G. Miegge: *The Virgin Mary.*

L. Bouyer: *Woman and Man with God.*

### (h) The Resurrection

On the third day after the Crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead leaving behind Him an empty tomb. No one saw Him rise but many saw Him risen and living. Belief in this fact has been universal in the Church from the first Easter day. The place of Judas among the Apostles was filled by one who had the credentials of a witness of the Resurrection, Acts 1:22. Every speech in Acts bears testimony. Paul appeals to loving witnesses and treats the Resurrection as a fact of general acceptance, 1 Cor. 15. From early days the great day of the Church was the weekly commemoration of the day on which He rose, taking the place of the sacred Sabbath even for Jewish Christians. All the Gospels record the fact, with variety of detail. The evidence to the fact is overwhelming. It is fundamental to the faith from the beginning. The same divine power which gave Jesus birth, the authority to heal and forgive, and kept Him without sin, raised Him from the dead.

The earliest testimony is that of Paul in 1 Cor. 15. This shows that he had sifted all the evidence later to be gathered in the Gospels and found it sufficient to justify a total change of life. The written evidence is supported by the whole series of events which constitute the Christian Church. What happened to change the outlook and character of the disciples? If we deny the Resurrection we have to find some hitherto unknown cause. How else can we explain all that has happened since? Our knowledge this day that Christ is alive springs from the fact that on that day He overcame death. For this fact the evidence cannot be shaken. Those who deny the fact do not argue from the weakness of the evidence. They ignore it and rely on the preconception that miracles do not happen. We believe, on firmer grounds, that the Scriptures are right when they say that Jesus rose from the dead. He was actually seen by those listed in 1 Cor. 15:1 ff.; He is known to be alive by millions today. The Resurrection is the greatest miracle of all. What brought the Church into being was the certainty that He who was dead is alive. No other cause is sufficient to account for what the Church was,

has been, and is. Christians do not worship a memory or an influence but a living Lord.

We could not believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God but for the Resurrection. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection together are the central act of the divine drama of salvation. The conflict with evil was real and the Son of God experienced defeat and death in the most poignant form. The Resurrection proclaims the triumph of life and love over death and sin. It establishes the right of Jesus to be Lord. The evidence is enough to convince any but those who approach it with their mind made up that such things cannot happen. If you take for granted that God could not be manifested in human life; that spirit cannot dominate matter, you will dismiss the Resurrection as impossible. Come with an open mind and the evidence is enough.

The significance of the Resurrection is considered further in Vol. II Chapters 2 and 6. We are concerned at present to relate this great fact to the meaning of the person of Jesus Christ. This may now be studied with the help of this analysis of the New Testament evidence:

1. The primary witness to the fact of the Resurrection and what it proclaims is 1 Cor. 15. Cf. Rom. 6:8f; 2 Cor. 4; Eph. 1; John 11:1-44.
2. The witness of the Gospels—Mark 16:1-8; Matt. 28; Luke 24; John 20 and 21.

*N.B.* Darkness of disciples dispelled, individuals renewed, special reference to Apostles, first day of week stressed rather than Sabbath. Acts 1:6 ff. marks the ending of the risen appearances and the beginning of the Resurrection life.

3. The Epistles bear witness to the new life which the risen Lord quickens in His disciples.
  - (a) Peter's preaching: Acts 2:22 ff.; 3:15; 4:5 ff.; 5:29 ff.; 10:34 ff.; 1 Pet. 1:3 ff.
  - (b) Paul's life in Christ begins with the appearance of the risen Lord. The crucified, and therefore accursed, Jesus is declared Christ and Lord in virtue of the Resurrection—Acts 9:1 ff.; 13:26 ff.; 17:30 ff.; 23:6 ff.
  - (c) Throughout His ministry, Paul proclaims that the Resurrection is essential, central, critical in God's saving work: Rom. 1:4; 5:10; 10:9; 2 Cor. 5:14 ff.; Eph. 1:19 ff.; 2 Tim. 1:10
  - (d) The growth of life in Christ both depends on the Resurrection and reveals more and more of its meaning —Rom. 4:24 f.;



6:4; Gal. 2:19 f.; Eph. 2:4 ff.; Phil. 1:21 ff.; 3:10 ff.; Col. 2:12 ff.; 3:1 ff.; 2 Tim. 2:11 ff.; Heb. 13:20 f.; 1 Pet. 3:21 f.; Rev. 1:4 ff.

F. Morison: *Who moved the Stone?*

W. Sanday: *Jesus Christ in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.*

E. G. Selwyn: *Essays Catholic and Critical*, 279 ff.

K. Lake: *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

A. M. Ramsey: *The Resurrection of Christ.*

H. Latham: *The Risen Master.*

G. D. Yarnold: *Risen Indeed.*

### (c) The Ascension

The fact of the *Ascension* is an important part of the story. There came a day when the appearances of the risen Lord came to an end and He vanished from earthly sight, Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50 ff.; Acts 1:9 ff. The story is told in terms of people who thought of Heaven as above and earth as below. So they said: 'He ascended into Heaven'. It was a final and solemn separation. The visible and local appearances had come to an end. Now they saw Him for the last time and a cloud received Him out of their sight. It was the cloud of the Presence of God, that which overshadowed the mountain at the Transfiguration. So they saw Him depart only to resume His place within the Godhead which had ever been His. This is the significance of the creedal phrase to which Scripture gives ample testimony; '*Sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty*', Mark 12:35 ff.; 14:62; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13. The general belief that He would return is bound up with the belief that He who for our salvation had come down from Heaven, returned into Heaven to reign, with God the Father, still human and divine. To sit at the right hand of God was, from Ps. 110 onward, the privilege of the triumphant Messiah. This has been fulfilled. His earthly life completed and his work accomplished by the victory over sin and death, He returns to His high estate. The phrase is not to be taken literally as if Father and Son sat side by side. It is simply the way of depicting divine power and authority. God is one. Cf. John 3:13; 6:62; 20:17; Acts 7:55 ff.; Rom. 8:33f.; Eph. 1:15 ff.; 4:1 ff.; Phil. 2:6 ff.; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:14; 7:25; 9:23-10:25; 1 Pet. 3:21 f.; Rev. 1:4 ff.

The Ascension is an event on the border between time and eternity. It declares that He who came down into the world of time belongs to the eternal world. The Ascension was the fitting end of the divine work in which Christ took on our nature. It is not the end of the whole story for Pentecost and the Church follow. Christ went up. The Spirit came down. The Church went out. Our language of time and space declares, as best it can, that His work in the world is over and He belongs elsewhere. He who was despised and rejected on earth has authority in Heaven. What He did on earth was done by One who has sovereignty over creation. It is not that He achieved this at the Ascension but rather that this event manifests that He is always at the right hand of the Father, Matt. 28:18; John 16:28. Thus the last appearance of the risen Christ crowned His work by the open declaration that He is the link between earth and Heaven, and by the transfer of His work beyond the limits of space and time. No longer was His presence to be confined to the Apostles in Palestine. Now He can be with every disciple, anywhere, anytime. During the forty days He had been preparing the disciples, by His coming and going, for the time when fellowship with Him would be invisible and intangible, yet closer than ever, Matt. 28:20. The day came when He ceased to appear in visible form and took His manhood to enthrone it in the heart of God. The ending of the earthly ministry brings this new fact. He who ascended is the Christ as embodied in the manhood of Jesus. It was not the release of a soul from prison. He returned to Heaven bearing the wounds made by our sin, taking up manhood unto God, not spiritualizing it away. The Epistle to the Hebrews draws the only conclusion: henceforth the ascended and glorified Lord is our eternal High Priest, reigning in humanity.

H. B. Swete: *The Appearances of our Lord after His Passion.*

E. L. Mascall: *Christ, the Christian, and the Church:* This treats the important but difficult theme of the permanence of the manhood of the ascended and glorified Christ.

J. G. Davies: *He Ascended into Heaven.*

## (iii) The Messianic Consciousness of Christ

The Gospels record deeds and words of Jesus which imply a sense of His own greatness e.g., the authority and certainty of His approach to men, Matt. 4:18 ff.; 7:21 ff.; the claim to be greater than the great names of the past and venerated institutions such as Sabbath and Temple, Matt. 5:17 ff.; 12:1 ff.; Mark 14:58; the finality of His demands on men and the acceptance of their response as natural, Matt. 8:18 ff.; 12:46 ff.; the assertion that on the attitude assumed to Himself, or on deeds done to others in His name, the final issues of Judgment would depend, Mark 9:38 ff.; 10:29 ff.; the claim to possess the divine functions of forgiveness and judgment, Matt. 9:1 ff.; 26:64 ff.; the inclusion of personal loyalty to Himself as part of human duty, Mark 8:34 ff.; 10:17 ff. All this flows from a *unique religious consciousness*. Jesus knew Himself to live in an intimacy with God which made Him the Son as absolutely as God was the Father. This Sonship implies in Jesus' estimate of Himself a relation to God different from that of saint or even angel, Mark 13:32; Matt. 11:25 ff. Here, again, He is not like but unlike His brethren. He is one in whom the knowledge of the Father was such that only He, the Son, could reveal Him and impart His grace. In Him were depths known only to God. This claim to an unshared nearness of God and to a perfection of fellowship with Him runs through the whole Gospel story. All that is implied in the Synoptists is made quite explicit in the Fourth Gospel, e.g., John 1:16 ff.; 34; 3:31 ff.; 5:17 f.; 25 ff.; 6:35 ff.; 8:39 ff. etc. The full significance of this is worked out by J. Denney in his book *Jesus and the Gospel with its revealing sub-title: 'Christianity justified in the mind of Christ'*.

The records, as we have seen, present Jesus as a real and perfect man. It is no less clear that much that is recorded goes beyond this. Not only did He strike His friends as being something more than human, He made claims for Himself beyond what was proper even for a prophet and showed a relation to God different even from that of a saint. He had spiritual power which expressed itself in an influence over men and an insight into their hearts, in an authority over evil spirits, in a power to heal disease, in a control over the

forces of nature, which are without parallel in history. What explanation does Jesus Himself give of all this, of His person and mission?

There can be no doubt that Jesus knew Himself to be the Messiah. Only so does His life-work become intelligible and His death has no meaning if He was only a good man and a prophet.

Our discussion of the various ideas, both human and super-human, associated with Messiah in Judaism, shows that when Jesus began His ministry, one who claimed to be Messiah had many elements out of which to build up his own conception of his vocation e.g., John 7:27, 42. Jesus certainly claimed to be the promised Messiah, and He gave His own meaning to the word, accepting some of the current ideas, rejecting others, and making creative modifications of the whole conception.

It has been argued that Jesus did not claim to be Messiah but that the early Church thus explained the person and mission of Jesus after the Resurrection and included in the Gospels the statement that during His life-time it had to be kept secret. This will not do. The Resurrection does not in itself point to Messiahship. No Jew, moreover, would think of a crucified Messiah. The denial that Jesus lived, worked, and was condemned, as Messiah, takes all meaning out of the Gospel story. For example, the story of Jesus' Temptation is intelligible only if Jesus claimed to be, and was indeed, Messiah. These particular tests are relevant only to one having a Messianic mission and powers to fulfil it. Here were three ways in which a man having a Messianic vocation would be tempted to act. To help the world by increasing material goods; to rule by great power; to build an empire—these are the natural ambitions of one both eager and able to benefit mankind. Moreover, the temptations correspond very closely to current popular hopes concerning Messiah. If we say in broad outline that the ordinary Jew of Jesus' day regarded Messiah as the one who would solve all his problems, then we can see Jesus in the wilderness struggling to see what are man's real problems and how the Father willed Him to meet them. The point is that the story of the Temptation has meaning only if Jesus knew Himself to be Messiah and to have powers to fulfil that function.

Over against all views which deny Jesus' claim to be Messiah we can set the clear and consistent account in Mark's Gospel. The initial revelation of the Messianic vocation is followed at once by the temptation to adopt wrong ends and use wrong methods. During the early ministry many of His words and works suggest to the people that He is Messiah but He has to attempt to conceal the fact in view of the many popular misconceptions as to what Messiah ought to be and to do. When the time is ripe, He reveals who He is to the men who had been with Him and ought to have learned what was in his mind. When He enters Jerusalem for the last time, He gives full open expression to His calling. He confesses that He is Messiah to the High Priest and on that account He is condemned, Mark 14:61 ff.

We must recognize that His Messiahship was not easy for Jesus. There was no current view which met His own insight into the meaning of His vocation and there were many wrong and imperfect ideas to correct and modify. So He accepts the title under constraint and there is reserve in His teaching. He does not readily call Himself Messiah and forbids others to do so. He keeps the Messianic claim in the background and preaches the Kingdom. Had He openly claimed to be Messiah from the beginning, what credentials had He to offer? Those most ready to accept Him as such would be the wilder nationalists, ready to use Him for their violent ends, even to make Him the Jewish king.

Nevertheless, though He does not put Himself forward as Messiah, He so acts and teaches as to put the burden of recognition on the disciples, Matt. 11:2 ff. All that He does and is gradually compels the disciples to recognize who He is and through Peter to acknowledge the fact openly. The scene at Caesarea Philippi is the crisis of the ministry, Mark 8:27 ff. Now that He has been accepted by His own circle as the Messiah, He can speak and act as the Messiah who must suffer and die to fulfil His calling. This conception controls the whole ministry of Jesus, explaining His teaching and justifying His method.

When Jesus says that Messiah *must* suffer, implying that violent death is part of the divine purpose He came to fulfil, He is thinking of Himself in terms of the Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah wrote. There is much evidence in the Gospels

that He drew inspiration from the great prophetic conception of the divine Servant and claimed to fulfil that function of representative suffering. In the light of this Jesus interpreted His vocation and saw His death as a sacrificial offering for the sake of men, and in which they might share. Neither in the prophecy nor in the Jewish understanding of it did the Servant mean Messiah. When Jesus claims to be fulfilling the vocation of the Servant, He is adding a new and creative element to the doctrine of Messiah. Here is something which is not merely drawn out of Scripture but is given in His consciousness of being the Son of God come to do His Father's will. By interpreting His Messiahship in terms of the ideal set out in Isaiah, He knew that He must suffer in order to serve and to save.

To justify and explain this we turn to consider the meaning of the titles used by and of Jesus in the Gospels.

W. Manson: *Jesus the Messiah*.

T. W. Manson: *The Servant-Messiah*.

E. Hatch: *The Messianic Consciousness of Jesus*.

M. D. Hooker: *Jesus and the Servant*.

W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias: *The Servant of God*.

#### (iv) The Titles of Jesus

Jesus, as we have seen, clearly thought of Himself as the *Servant of the Lord* who appeared in the four songs of redemption, Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12. Herein the prophetic doctrine of salvation comes to a climax. The Servant is he through whom God will save. Himself not a sinner, he is one with his people and feels their sins are his. The deepest pang of his suffering is due to the tension between his loyalties to God and man. He accepts underserved suffering because it will mean the saving of sinners. The suffering is not punishment but part of his work as Servant of the Lord. Unlike the High Priest who failed at the crucial point, the Servant suffers unto his own end.

The story of the Baptism shows that Jesus thought of Himself so, as one with mankind. He could fulfil His mission to save men from sin only if He identified His sinless self with those He came to save, and served them by suffering. Mark 10:45. To this Jesus adds the new idea that the

Servant is to triumph in saving sinners by His death and resurrection. After Caesarea Philippi, He stresses that suffering and triumph go together. Now that the disciples have accepted Him as Messiah, in spite of the disappointment of popular hopes, He can openly speak of dying, rising, coming in glory.

As Servant, Jesus saves others by suffering for them. It is His mission to bear their sins and so save them from sin. In doing this He wins His victory. When He returns from the tomb it is not as a solitary survivor of death but as the triumphant Servant who will justify many. From the beginning, the first Church recognized that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah and the first explanation of the Cross is in terms of the suffering and victory of the Servant.

Bound up with Jesus' vocation as the Servant is the title *Son of Man*. Other names He accepted; this He chose for Himself. It has a long history in Jewish writings. In Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4 it means simply 'man'. In Dan. 7:13 it begins to have a special meaning either of the saints of Israel or a true king. In the Similitudes of Enoch the Son of Man is the Elect One, named before creation as a superhuman and pre-existent being whom God keeps to be judge and to reign in glory. In the New Testament the term is so important as to require careful treatment.

✓(a) Apart from Acts 7:56 (and Heb. 2:6 ff. quoting Ps. 8) Son of Man appears only in the Gospels and with very few exceptions, e.g., John 12:34, only Jesus Himself uses the phrase. In some early references it may mean simply 'man' e.g., Mark 2:28; or it is a synonym for 'I' e.g., Luke 7:34; 9:58; but after Caesarea Philippi it refers definitely to the passion and/or Parousia, i.e., the Return in Glory.

✓(b) From the Jewish background the term acquired a distinctive, almost technical meaning, which Jesus took to Himself; I am *that* Man, Daniel's Man, Enoch's Man! Mark 14:61 ff.; Luke 22:66 ff. This claim was held to involve blasphemy.

✓(c) The most important uses are at and after Caesarea Philippi. Now all the ideas denoted by Messiah, Servant, Son of Man, run together and the element of the triumph to come is stressed. Jesus is claiming that in Himself the Son of Man has come, already wielding divine authority, and that by His



death He will save and triumph, and will return to judge and rule.

(d) All this is made quite explicit in the Fourth Gospel where the pre-existence of the Son of Man is taught, John 3:13; 6:62, and the main idea is that the Son of Man will be glorified being lifted up, 3:14; 6:62; 8:28; 12:23; 13:31. There is also the idea of salvation through death, 12:23ff.; and of judgment 5:27.

It is likely that Ps. 8:4 helped Jesus to determine the meaning He gave to 'Son of Man'. The original idea is that of mankind in general but the way in which Heb. 2:6 ff. uses Ps. 8 shows that it was easy to pass to the thought of the *representative* man. Much in the Gospels, e.g., Matt. 25:31 ff., shows that Jesus was conscious of His representative character. This idea was later taken up by Paul e.g., Rom. 5:12 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:45 ff.; Eph. 2:15.

We conclude that Jesus' description of Himself as Son of Man expresses the sense in which He understood His Messianic work. His was a mission of suffering and death and it would be fulfilled in victory and resurrection. So Jesus transformed the Jewish doctrine of Son of Man by putting into it the content of the Servant prophecies. Herein the previously contrasted ideas of *Passion* and *Parousia* come together.

In many places where Jesus names Himself Son of Man others call Him *Son of God*. e.g., Mark 14:61 ff.; John 1:49 ff. The term 'Son of God' has many uses in the Old Testament, e.g., of angels, Job 1:6; of judges, Ps. 82:6; of Israel the People of God, Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1; of Davidic kings (a Messianic reference), 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7, 12. The sonship is not physical but spiritual. In later Jewish writings the term could mean a righteous man, but in Enoch and Esdras it refers to Messiah. Some New Testament references suggest that in Jesus' day it was a synonym for Messiah e.g., Mark 14:61; Matt. 27:39 ff.; John 1:49. Among the Gentiles the term could be used of a king or worker of wonders.

The Synoptic Gospels never explain the meaning of the title but all the sources imply that Jesus is the Son of God, Mark 1:11; 8:38; 9:7; 14:36; Luke 1:35; 2:49; 4:1 ff.; 10:21 f.; Matt. 16:16 ff.; 25:34; 28:19. Nor did Jesus openly claim the title but He implies it in the way in which He speaks

of the Father and the Son, e.g., Matt. 11: 25 ff.; Mark 13:32. In Mark 1:11 'beloved' means 'only' Son and this links up with the characteristic use in the Fourth Gospel, John 1:14; 10:30 etc.; cf. Matt. 3:13 ff.; 4:1 ff. Mark 9:2 ff.

Jesus' use of 'My Father' expresses the conviction, held from the beginning, of being in intimate communion with the Father such as was shared by no others. It is in this relationship that His claim to be Messiah rests. He did not call Himself Son because it was a messianic title. He knew Himself to be Messiah because He was the Son sent to do the Father's will. As Son, He takes the role of Son of Man and interprets it in terms of the Servant. The ultimate truth about Jesus is that He is Son of God. The Gospels do not define the title and even the Epistles are incomplete e.g., Col. 1:13 ff.; 2:9 f.; Heb. 1:1-5:10; 1 John 4:7 ff. Yet it is certain that a sense of Sonship, without parallel elsewhere, is the secret of Jesus' work and ministry.

In the world of Jesus' day Lord was a title as common and varied as is 'Swami' in India today. It was a term of courtesy to men. It was used of deified emperors. It denoted the gods of the Greeks to whom worshippers gave themselves as slaves, cf. 1 Cor. 8:5 f. It was used or rabbis. It is also the Greek translation of Yahweh and is used of God in the New Testament—and in the later books so of Jesus.

In the Synoptic Gospels the term is used rarely e.g., Matt. 7:21 ff.; Mark 1:3; 11:3; 12:35 ff.; Luke 6:46; 7:13; 10:1; 22:61. The usage certainly deepened after the Resurrection but it had begun to be used in the full divine sense before the Cross, and at Jesus' own suggestion, Mark 12:35 ff.; cf. Ps. 110. It has been suggested that Jesus was first habitually called Lord i.e., God, by the Greek Christians but if this is so, it was only to express an experience and a faith long present, or the Jewish Christians would have protested. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:22; James 5:7 f.; 1 Pet. 2:3 f.; Jude 14; Rev. 14:13; 17:14—all from Jewish writers.

The study of the deepening of the meaning of Lord as applied to Jesus illustrates the way in which the Apostles' faith grew out of the creative facts we have been discussing. The Old Testament and the later Jewish writings looked for the fulfilment of the Messianic Hope. There came One whom

John Baptist pointed to as able to meet the deepest needs and expectations. Those who lived with Him saw His works and heard His claim. He revealed to them the truth of God, meeting the deep demands of the soul. They saw Him die and then return as conqueror over death. At the mouth of Thomas they made the great venture of faith: 'My Lord and my God'. This was gathered up and expressed in the first confession and creed of the Church e.g., John 13:13; 20:26 ff.; Acts 2:34 ff.; 9:17; Rom. 10:8ff.; 1 Cor. 8:6; 10:21; 12:3 ff.; Eph. 4:5 ff.; Rev. 22:20f. He who was born, lived, died and rose again, ever lives and reigns. He is to be worshipped and obeyed as Lord of all because He is one with the Father.

Vincent Taylor: *The Names of Jesus*.

#### 4. THE APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION

In the New Testament, facts are never bare facts. They always imply or express a doctrine. This is true even of the Synoptic Gospels which narrate the story of the days of Jesus' humiliation, from the Annunciation to the Ascension, when His Godhead was veiled. Yet they were written after the events they describe by men who believed in the divinity of their risen Lord. They do not merely set out the facts creative of faith. In their estimate of Jesus they confess the faith. Mark knows this true man, of whom he treasures so many memories passed on by Peter, to be Christ and Son of God. He writes to illustrate the preaching of the first Church by telling how the Kingdom of God had been manifested in the earthly life of Him who is now at the right hand of God. Mathew, moving within the context of a faith expressed at the beginning in 1:23 and at the end by 28:18 ff.; bears witness to the Messiah in whom the ancient hope has been fulfilled and shows how prophecy bears witness to Him. Luke for whom 1:35 and 24:44 ff. express the determining points, assumes throughout that this man had a divine nature and mission and gives to Him the name of Lord, in its deepest sense, even in the days of His flesh. It is important to realize that although the first three Gospels have no explicit doctrine of the Incarnation such as we find in the Fourth Gospel, they hold the faith no less than does John.

Nevertheless, in our approach to doctrine through history we are not limited to the evidence provided by the Synoptic Gospels. We turn now to the other books, written for the most part before the Gospels, to consider what they imply concerning the faith and worship of the first Christians. It is always important to see how a person strikes his contemporaries. The Epistles tell us what was thought about Jesus in the first two generations after the Crucifixion. When the Church came into being, its members had certain facts e.g., the remembrance of what Jesus had said and done; the events of the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension; the hopes of the Old Testament which helped them to understand the Messiah who had come. These they used and interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the fellowship of worship. It was the knowledge that these things had happened, especially the Resurrection, that gave certainty to the meaning they applied to them. It was experience of the presence and power of Jesus that led them to proclaim Him as Lord.

It may be said, very briefly, that the Christ of the Church is the Jesus of Galilee interpreted by His effects. The meaning of His person was learned through what He did in and for men. He revealed a new way and gave power to walk in it so that those who came under His influence spoke of themselves as a new creation. He did this not merely by teaching and example but by the gift of Himself. In His whole redeeming impact on them, men knew Him to be doing for them what only God could do, so they named Him Lord. Here was no teacher, prophet, adviser, but the Saviour who met them with a power that could only be divine. That which had first been experienced by a few in the days of His flesh continued to be given, after He had passed from sight, to all who gave themselves to Him, though they had never seen Him, in trust. From the beginning Jesus Christ was never the subject of faith, but always its object i.e., men did not seek to copy His belief in God, they believed in Him as God. There are some who argue that the Christ of faith is different from the Jesus of history. They say that new elements were brought in by Paul and others so that the Church doctrine of Christ is an artificial compound of Jewish and Greek ideas added to the simple Gospel facts. The truth

is that the belief in the Lordship of Jesus existed from the beginning and that any development we can trace is in the explanation of the belief not in its substance.

This may be illustrated by brief reference to the tradition of the first Church as it has been preserved in the early sermons in Acts e.g., 2:14-4:12; which give an authentic account of what Peter and others were saying in the weeks after the Crucifixion; and in the teaching of Paul e.g., Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:3; 16:22. These were days of religious enthusiasm rather than of theological thinking and we cannot expect developed doctrinal statements. Yet we find the first Christians using every available term to describe Jesus, e.g., Acts 3:13 ff.; 4:27 f.; 5:31; 7:37; 56. They asserted His full, manhood, Acts 2:22, and knew Him to be at the right hand of God. In His name was forgiveness, Acts 2:38; 5:31 and He would be Judge, Acts 10:42. He was Lord and Christ, Acts 2:36. He had been sent from Heaven to redeem Israel and they gave to Him the word used in Greek for Yahweh and the words describing Him. Above all, the fact that they *prayed*: 'Lord, come', cf. Acts 7:59 shows what they believed.

It needs, however, the whole New Testament to show who Christ is. There is much variety in its account, due to the special interests and circumstances of each writer. Jesus is Son of Man (Synoptists), the Servant (Acts), the Second Adam (Paul), the great High Priest (Hebrews), the Incarnate Word (John). There is some development of expression, due to growing reflection on what Christians, in their experience, found him to be e.g., Phil. 2:6 ff.; Col. 1:14 ff.; John 1:1 ff. Development of doctrine, both in the New Testament and in the Church to this day, is necessary to correct wrong teaching, as when Paul had to define the meaning of Christ in more exact terms in order to meet the Colossian heresy which regarded Him merely as an angel. There is also development when current ideas are used to illustrate the Gospel, as when John applied the doctrine of the *Word* to Jesus. But later teaching supplements, never contradicts, the earlier. Nor is anything added to the revelation given once for all in Christ. As more and more of the meaning is drawn out of what has been given, each stage passes without break into the next and makes clear what was implicit.

The most significant thing is the *unity* of the New Testament writers. All agree that Jesus Christ, while truly human, is more than merely human. He so shares the nature of God that the only fitting name is *Lord*. There is a common element which enabled the Church to gather these diverse documents, but no others, into the Canon of the New Testament. It is not a doctrinal formula—but a proclamation, a preaching, a *kerygma*. It was not the teaching of Jesus but preaching Jesus which made converts. *We preach Christ*. From Pentecost onward, Christians were proclaiming a common apostolic gospel; declaring that in Jesus a unique event had happened. God had visited and redeemed His People. Before any document was written the Apostles were preaching that which is reflected in the sermons of Acts 2:14-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:34-43 and Paul preach the same Gospel e.g., Rom. 1:2-5; 4:24 f.; 8:31-34; 10:8 f.; 1 Cor. 15:3 ff.; Gal. 1:3 f.; 1 Thess. 1:9 f. Within a few years of the Cross, Paul is handing on what he received and calling it 'My Gospel'.

It is possible to reconstruct the Apostolic Preaching in general outline. It has three main points:

(1) The claim that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled, Acts 2:16; 10:43; Rom. 1:2; 1 Cor. 15:3 f.

(2) The account of the great act of God in the fact of Jesus Christ. He was born of David's line, Acts 2:30; Rom. 1:3; went about doing good, Acts 10:37 f.; was crucified, Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal. 3:13; according to the divine purpose, Acts 2:23; 3:18; Rom. 4:23ff.; 1 Cor. 15:3; was raised from the dead, Acts 2:24; 3:15; 1 Cor. 15:4; was exalted Acts 2:33; Rom. 8:34; and will come again, Acts 3:20 f.; 10:42; Rom. 2:16; 1 Thess. 1:10.

(3) The call to repent and accept forgiveness in Christ, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43.

Thus the facts of Christ were proclaimed in the setting of the new age, now come, which gave them their meaning. The new age is here, and Christ, in virtue of the Cross and Resurrection, is its Lord. In Him God has acted on men's behalf finally and decisively. At the heart of the preaching is the first and fundamental confession of the Church: Jesus is Christ and Lord. This runs through all the New Testament, whether in Gospel, letter, sermon, tract, and makes it one book. The terms and the ideas vary but behind them is



the same religious attitude. Holding fast to His manhood they put Jesus on the side of God.

A. M. Hunter: *The Unity of the New Testament.*

C. H. Dodd: *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments; According to the Scriptures.*

It is not possible, within the scope of this chapter, to consider in detail the various books of the New Testament. We shall here refer, in brief, to the main contributions to the understanding of Christ of the leading writers. Other books in this series and those referred to in the text provide material for further study.

(i) The main theme of the *First Epistle of Peter* is the suffering of Christ which is the way of salvation. The writer's own sufferings have led him to a deeper understanding of the mind of Christ and the fact of a crucified Messiah is no longer a problem, 1:10 f.; 2:21 ff.; 3:15 ff. The doctrine of Christ is expressed in the titles given to Him e.g., 2:6 ff., 25; 5:4. The Jesus who lived as man among men, 2:23, is exalted Lord, 3:22; to be named along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, 1:2; the Mediator, 1:21; 2:5. Peter's use of Isa. 8:12 f. in 3:13 ff. implies that Christ has the place of God in the life of the believer.

(ii) The *Epistle of James*, often disregarded for doctrinal purposes because of its ethical stress, implies a deep understanding of Christ. He is Lord, associated with the Father, 1:1; Lord of glory and object of faith, 2:1. Christians await His coming, confident in His power, 5:7 ff. Prayer will save the sick anointed in His name, 5:14 ff. It is the simple Christology of a man of strong faith untroubled by doubts, but it is the faith which the Creed had to interpret. The reminder that justification by faith does not exempt from the moral law is fortified by stress on the regenerating power of faith and the account of the new law as perfect, royal, free, 1:25; 2:8 ff. There is in Christ, moreover, a source of power not in Moses; He offers grace to enable a man to respond, 4:10, 15.

(iii) *The Epistle to the Hebrews* is important as showing how an unknown Christian, of temperament and background different from that of Paul and John, shared the same faith in Christ but gave to it an original interpretation. He has the strong sense of awe in the presence of God characteristic of those whose main interest is worship. He stresses that



it was fitting for the Son of God to share our human life that, as our great High Priest, He might sympathize with our suffering and temptation and so enable us to draw near to God, 2:10 ff.; 4:14 ff. His purpose is to show that Christ is the ideal High Priest who offered the only true sacrifice and so achieved that perfect access to God which the old Covenant failed to do, 5:1 ff.; 6:19 f.; 9:11 ff. The whole argument turns on the quality of Christ's person as expressed in terms of His work. The author lays great stress on Jesus' humanity, 5:7 f.; and in 1:1 ff. goes very deeply into the divine meaning. He shares the same doctrine as to the Lordship of Jesus found in the rest of the New Testament but adds several new titles e.g., 3:1; 5:10; 9:15; 12:2. Jesus, once tempted and tried like us, 4:15, is the Son, and heir of all things; the divine agent in creation; the radiance of God's glory, the impress of His being and the sustainer of life, 1:1 ff. He is the Saviour who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, 6:19 f.; 7:25; 9:12; 10:14; 13:8. He can save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him, 7:25; 9:11 ff. In 1:8 He is named God over against the angels. His humiliation and death reveal in human terms the love which is of the very nature of God. So certain is the author of the wonder of what God has done in Christ that he has no mercy on those who deny or reject Him, 2:3; 10:26 f.; 12:25.

(iv) Paul enriched Christian thinking about Christ by drawing out the implications of earlier teaching and using new terms but he did not add anything. He shared the faith of the first Christians e.g., Acts 2:22 and Gal. 4:4; Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13; Acts 4:12 and 1 Cor. 3:11. In course of time he had to face new problems and so developed what was implied in the earlier teaching. But the doctrine of e.g., Colossians, is not another Gospel.

At his conversion Paul found that the living Christ removed all the barriers which had blocked his long search for salvation. He found Christ to be what only God can be. So he adopted towards Him the attitude of prayer, trust and worship which can properly be given only to God. Paul did not set out deliberately to prove that Jesus is God but he found it impossible to stop short of that belief. So he became the first great interpreter of Jesus. His doctrine of Christ flows from the certainty that in Him God had worked the supreme

act of grace to save men from sin. Christ is Saviour; therefore He is Lord.

There is some development of thought. The earliest and simplest account, in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, sets Christ on the side of God as the source of grace and peace in the Church so that the life of the Christian depends on Him, 1 Thess. 1:1 ff.; 2 Thess. 1:1 ff. He addresses Christ in prayer along with the Father, 1 Thess. 3:11 ff. He does for men, by His death, what only God can do, 1 Thess. 5:10. In the 'Romans group' of letters the main theme is the all-sufficiency of Christ for salvation. Nothing can be added to what He has done and does. N.B. the implications of Rom. 1:2 ff. In the Captivity Epistles Paul is forced to correct false teaching. His thought takes a wider sweep and he views Christ in relation to God and the universe, exhausting the resources of language to make clear what are the implications of the Gospel he has been preaching all along e.g., Phil. 2:2ff. (where the tremendous *kenosis* passage comes in almost incidentally in reference to Christian humility), Col. 1:15 ff.; Eph. 1:3 ff.

In Paul's experience of Christ there are certain main elements each of which is reflected in the account he gives of the meaning of Christ.

(a) He had an assurance of forgiveness which was the source of new moral power. Christ had delivered him from the misery described in Rom. 7:7 ff. and enabled him to triumph over the defeated enemy, 1 Cor. 15:55 ff. So he preached Christ as offering to all men release from sin and power for goodness. Because Christ had died and risen, God can forgive sin without compromising His righteousness, Gal. 3:1 ff.; Rom. 3:21 ff.; 5:1 ff; Eph. 2:11 ff. Henceforth Christ is the One ever to be praised as the Saviour 'who loved me and gave himself up for me'.

(b) From the Damasucs road onward, Paul had such permanent personal fellowship with the risen Christ as is described in Gal. 2:20. This meant a new life of goodness, Rom 6:1 ff.; and a joy and power such as the world can neither give nor take away, Phil. 4:7. What Christ had given to Paul was available for all, 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:28. Christ is both the new environment in which Christians live and the power of God at work in them, Eph. 3:17ff. He is Life-giving Spirit, 1 Cor. 15:45.

(c) He was a member of the society of those who believed in Jesus as Lord and were by Him brought into direct relations with God, Gal. 3:26 ff.; Col. 3:9 ff.; 5:17 ff.; Rom. 5:1 f.; Eph. 2:18. As he shared in the life, work, worship, thought and growth of the Church, Paul knew that Christ had remade the People of God and sent them to reconcile all men to God. The Church is the Body of which Christ is the divine Head that He may be all in all, 1 Cor. 12:12 ff.; 15:20 ff.; Eph. 1:22 f.; 2:19 ff.; 4:11 ff. Christ's Lordship of the Church raised great questions as to His relation to God and the world. Paul never tolerated even the thought that Christ was a second god or the representative in the world of an absent god. Yet if He is Lord of the Church which is God's agent for the redemption of the world, He must stand in a special relation to God and the world. The heresy at Colossae, which reduced the dignity and saving power of Christ, gave Paul the occasion to work out his great conception of the Cosmic Christ.

We find the ultimate meaning of the world in Him in whom all things were created; in whom God comes into the world as He comes in no other person or way. There is finality in Christ. The Jews, for whom God had become remote, thought of God as working in the world through His Wisdom, Prov. 8:22 ff.; Wisd. 7:25, 8:1. Paul used this conception to express the final significance of Jesus, applying to Him the nature and functions associated with the Wisdom of God, Col. 1:15 ff. cf. Rom. 8:18 ff.; Eph. 1:9f. He writes of Christ as deriving His being from God, reflecting His glory, dwelling with Him before creation. He is agent and sustainer of creation, bringing order out of chaos. He is the divine End to which the world moves. This identification of Christ with Wisdom, like John's doctrine of the Word; served to express His relation to God and the world in such a way as to maintain the oneness of God and the Lordship of Christ. Without identifying the Father and the Son, Paul was able to show, without ambiguity, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

In this way a man, born a Jew and re-born a Christian, proclaimed Jesus the Christ. As the personal agent of God's great redeeming act, He is pre-existent and divine. As the only one perfectly obedient to the Father's will, He is exalted

to be Head of the new humanity. These are the terms with which the Church was later to work out its Christological formula: Two natures in one person. But before the Councils met, their conclusions were taking shape as the creative facts passed through the mind of this new man in Christ. Paul provides the greatest illustration of the truth that the reality of the Creeds lies in that surrender of the soul which precedes the expression in words.

(v) *The Gospel and the First Epistle of John* represent the same view about Christ and share the same purpose of presenting Him in such a way as to arouse life-giving faith, John 20:31; 1 John 5:13 ff. No one expresses more clearly what Jesus meant to the first Christians. John lays great stress on the humanity of the Lord, e.g., John 4:6; 11:35; 12:27; 19:28 and he repudiates those who deny the reality of the Incarnation, 1 John 2:22. And in this flesh God is manifest. He relates Jesus not simply to John Baptist, Mark 1:1 ff.; nor to Abraham, Matt. 1:1; nor even to Adam, Luke 3:38, but to the eternal being of God, John 1:1 ff. The Prologue sets out the conception of Christ for which the ensuing narrative is the evidence. His person and work are divine in virtue of His nature as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, John 1:14 ff., from all eternity, 8:38, 58; 10:36; 17:5. Hence He confronts men with the life, power and grace of God. To see Him is to see the Father, 3:31 ff.; 7:28 ff., for He and the Father are one, 10:30 ff. He is One who can call Himself Way, Truth, Life, Resurrection, 14:6, 11:25. He mediates divine blessing through fellowship with Himself, 5:19 ff.; 6:35 ff.; 15:1 ff. The fact that John gives this high testimony in the course of a narrative of a life lived on earth is evidence of the significance of Jesus for the faith of the early Church. Here is a man, but not just a man, even the greatest and best, but the man from Heaven who confronts men in the power and love of God.

John's great contribution is the use he makes of the idea of the Word to express the meaning of Jesus. It is a term of varied origin and many meanings. In John's day it was used as a means of reconciling the transcendence of the One God with simple religious needs. It is as it John is saying: You talk of the Word as the agent of creation, the source of light and life to men. *Jesus* is the Word. He in whom the

Word became incarnate is the true bond uniting Heaven and earth. John does not add anything to Christian teaching; but by so bringing the Gospel facts into the stream of current ideas, he enabled the Church to express its doctrine in terms of the world's thought.

An illuminating contrast has been drawn between the Christology of Paul and that of John. For the former, the incarnate life is the supremely effective act of God's love. For the latter it is the uniquely true expression. In fact, the two are complementary. 'When Christian thought has succeeded in doing justice to both aspects of the truth together, Christology will be complete'. See O. C. Quick: *op. cit.*, 108 ff.

(vi) Finally, we take brief note of the *Revelation of John the Divine* in which Jewish Messianic ideas were transformed by an exalted account of the Messiah who had come and who now shares the Father's throne. The Son is declared to have His authority from the Father but His equality with the Father is stressed and the same terms are used to describe both. Jesus, as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, meets the powers which seek to possess men and redeems them by His blood. He is Alpha and Omega i.e., is what He is now, eternally, and not just since the Ascension. The references to the Churches show the centrality of the person and work of Christ and His incomparable authority in the faith and life of Christians. The conception of Christ is not inferior to that of any other writer and in some respects is the most exalted in the New Testament. All that can be ascribed to God in the worship of earth and Heaven is His. The closing words combine the first prayer of the Church with a phrase of the Apostolic Benediction and end the New Testament with an Aramic phrase linking it with the Old: Amen, Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

L. Cerfanx: *Christ in the Theology of Paul*.

C. A. Anderson Scott: *Christianity according to St Paul*.

W. F. Howard: *Christianity according to St John*.

A. E. J. Rawlinson: *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*.

G. K. A. Bell (Ed.): *Mysterium Christi*.

V. Taylor: *The person of Christ in New Testament Teaching*.

O. Cullmann: *The Christology of the New Testament*.

## 5. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

The revelation given in person and in action in the Gospels is confirmed by the interpretation of the Epistles. The revelation, though complete in the fact of Christ, is not effective among men till it is understood by them. The necessary inspired explanation came from the beginning. Not all was grasped at once and the presentation had to be modified according to the needs of the hearers. Yet it is certain that, from the first days of the Church, men knew that in Jesus Christ God had appeared in flesh to reconcile them to Himself.

Today there are many who want to believe in the kind of God Jesus spoke of and to follow the kind of life He lived and taught. They are ready to follow Him as leader but not to worship Him as Lord alone. This is not the way of the New Testament. Here belief is *in* Jesus. As Luther said later: 'We are undone if this man be not God'. Only such a One is able to save a world given over to sin and near to death. As we shall see from the brief look at the history of the doctrine which follows, the faith of the Church has been sound only in so far as it has maintained the great common witness of the New Testament, which, in all its variety of phrasing and treatment, represents 'a common religious relation to Christ, a common debt to Him, a common sense that everything in the relations of God and man must be and is determined by Him' (Denney).

The study of the revelation of God in Christ set out in the Gospels, and of the inspired interpretation in the Epistles leads to certain conclusions.

(i) Jesus was truly man. He had a human body and soul. The whole incarnate life was genuinely human, Luke 2:52; Heb. 4:15. We do not really believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God if we hesitate to accept the Gospel evidence of His complete humanity including weariness, hunger, thirst, temptation, disappointment, fear, limitation of knowledge and power; and so make His humanity partial and incomplete. To explain away evidence such as is given in Mark 3:5; 4:38; 6:5 ff.; 34; 8:12; 10:14; 13:22; 15:34; Matt. 4:1 ff.; Luke 2:40 ff.; 19:41; 22:44; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5 ff.; Heb. 5:7 ff. is to deny the mind of Christ, Mark 9:35; 10:45; and to lessen



the wonder of the Gospel that for our sakes the Son of God came down from Heaven and accepted humanity with all its limitations. To do His saving work He identified Himself with those He came to save, Heb. 2:17. His true manhood is the proof of the grace of God and the ground of our salvation.

(ii) He was more than man. He was the pre-existent John 1:1 ff., who became man, and to this end accepted some kind of self-emptying, Phil. 2:5 ff., but remained always in unique filial relation to the Father. He alone is Son of God and Lord, the divine Saviour who claims utter allegiance. It is fatal to neglect His manhood, but it is impossible to stop there. The greatness of His manhood is that it is the servant form on earth of the One who is originally in the form of God. He who was born of woman in the fulness of time is the eternal Son. To call Him divine is not to argue that He was a man raised to divine status as a reward for His obedience; not that as the highest and greatest among men He manifested the truth of God; not that He was like God but that He is very God of very God. This is His own claim, Matt. 4:3 ff.; 11:27; Mark 1:11; 2:10; 9:7; 12:6; 12:35ff.; 14:61ff.; Luke 7:48; 22:29f.; John 8:42ff. It is supported by the testimony of the Apostles: John 1:14; 20:31; Rom. 1:2f. 1 Cor. 8:5 f.; Heb. 1:1 ff. It has been the constant witness of the Church and of Christian experience, informed by the Holy Spirit.

(iii) The humanity of Jesus and His divinity are both complete, but He is one person, with one consciousness. When we say that Jesus Christ is both God and man we do not mean that He alternates, e.g., doing miracles as God, but weeping as man. In all He does and is He is both God and man; the eternal Son in the form of the Servant.

The Christian interpretation of this strange blending in one person of normal and unique, of natural and supernatural, is that Jesus is the Christ, God's only Son our Lord. From the beginning it was seen that only such an interpretation made the facts credible and accorded with the general impression made by His personality. This alone made the whole story coherent and intelligible.

(i) *As Christ*, Jesus is the anointed of God, the One who fulfils both the expectations of the Jews and the desires of the



Gentiles. As the goal of past history and the source of growth to come, He is the Hope of the world.

(ii) *As God's only Son*, He was begotten in a special way and not as other sons of men; not by creation, adoption, physical process, but by deriving His being eternally from the Father. He is Son as is none other; the eternal Son of the eternal Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, begotten not created.

(iii) *As Lord*, He has by right dominion and authority over mankind. He is Head over all creation. All things hold together in Him through Him and for Him.

This means that the life on earth was not the materialization of some phantom god; not the promotion of a man to deity; but an *Incarnation*, a real union of God and man. God was manifest in Jesus in human form. This was the only explanation which made sense of the facts. As all could see, He was a man: full, true and perfect; the man in whom all manhood is summed up, the representative man in whom each man can find his best self. Yet only if He were also fully and truly divine could believers explain their impression and experience of Him. In Him, man was perfect man and God became real to men.

This is the faith set out in the Creeds. They have as the answer of the Church to the question: Who say you that I am? We must learn to see why the truth about Jesus is expressed in this way. To understand the words we use when we say the Creed we must know something of the causes; how the truths expressed were drawn out of the creative facts in the face of certain errors which would have denied them. The false or imperfect expressions of heresy required that the common sense of believers be so expressed as to exclude error. Thus the Creeds take on, for us, added significance when we know something of the controversies which led to their formulation.

Moreover, the task of expressing the meaning of Christ for our own day, in terms which shall be understood by the people, requires that the teachers of the Church know something of what has gone before. We can best use the New Testament now if we have some knowledge of the main lines of Christian thinking in the years between. The history of

Christian doctrine shows the growth and better understanding of a living faith. The purpose of the theologian, then and now, is to give the fullest possible expression, in current language, to the truth manifested once and for all in the person and work of Christ. It is good to see how the expression has developed in the face of partial and erroneous accounts which the believing Church had to reject, and in so doing, to reform and correct its own teaching. The story is neither dull nor unnecessary. The truth of the Gospel is at stake. It is no mere debate on abstract propositions, nor the desire to have correct formulas. Theologians have ever been constrained to give adequate expression to the saving facts that men may hear and believe. The Church had, and has, to say what is and is not compatible with the faith that Jesus is Lord.

In the early centuries all the problems raised today concerning Christ were debated and the inadequate doctrines which many are now tempted to hold were rejected as inconsistent with Scripture and the facts of experience. From the beginning it was seen that problems were involved in the faith which confesses Jesus Lord and God. On the one hand there was the need to reconcile monotheism with belief in the divinity of Christ. On the other hand there was the need to reconcile belief in the eternity of the Son of God with the conviction of the true humanity of His life on earth.

In the course of the argument leading up to the expression of the mind of the Church in the Creed, we notice how exaggerations of one aspect of the truth lead to exaggerations on the other side. This is due to the positive character of heresy. Heresy is not simply the denial of truth. It is the self-willed choice of a way of thought which does not submit to the God-given facts as a whole. Each heresy affirmed one aspect of the Gospel, but so exaggerated it as to exclude other aspects. Then when this was noted there was a swing to exaggeration on the other side. The Church had to maintain balance.

Ideas of God and the facts of Christ needed harmonizing. Most early heresies rose from a mistaken reverence for the honour of God. This was due in part to the sense that matter is evil and may not touch God; in part to the demand of the philosophers that doctrine fall in line with their preconceived

ideas. The Church overcame the danger by fidelity to the given facts of the revelation in Christ; by letting Himself be His own interpreter; and recognizing that the 'foolishness of God is wiser than men'.

(i) The New Testament shows that to the Jew the doctrine of a crucified Messiah was a scandal and that to the Greeks the idea of a divine sufferer was folly. Hence arose the first two heresies. The *Ebionites* taught that if He suffered He was not divine and suggested that the divine Christ descended on the human Jesus at Baptism and left Him at the Crucifixion. The *Docetists* taught that if He was divine His sufferings were unreal. They suggested that Christ was not a true man but a phantom in which the Son of God made Himself visible for a while. The faith of the early Church as expressed in the Apostles' Creed shows that believers were not prepared to compromise the true divinity of Christ nor to tolerate any refusal to take seriously the reality of His manhood. They held on to the belief in One who was divine and did suffer. He who came down from heaven lived a full human life and was one person. By holding firm to the Gospel facts they were able to make the faith, which at first seemed nonsense to many, both reasonable and intelligible.

(ii) In the third century a renewed insistence on monotheism so stressed the oneness of God as to make it hard to think of any real and eternal distinctions within His being. The doctrine associated with *Sabellius* regarded Father, Son and Spirit as representing the three modes in which the one God revealed Himself. This led the Church to new efforts to relate belief in the divinity of Christ (and of the Holy Spirit) to monotheism and to stress the fact that Father, Son and Spirit are not mere aspects of the One God but real existences, personal and eternal, in the Godhead.

In doing this, some theologians so stressed the subordination of the Son to the Father as to open the way to the dangerous teaching of *Arius* who denied the eternity of the divine Word. He argued that God created the Word to be His instrument in creating the world and that this Word, which once was not, became incarnate in Jesus for the redemption of the world. Arius did not deny that Jesus was the divine Son. He did question the relation of His divinity to ultimate Godhead and in so doing made Christ a second and lesser god.

The wording of the Apostles' Creed did not clearly rule out Arius' error, so the Church had to find words which would express the essential oneness of the Father and the Son. The words which, after long argument, were found, are those describing Christ in the Nicene Creed, especially 'of one substance with the Father'. The doctrine set out in this Creed makes explicit the New Testament faith that Christ is the only begotten Son; that whatever is the 'essence' of God, He is that. The wording is of the fourth century but the meaning is permanent. Does our Saviour merely resemble God or does He come from the very being of God? The Creedal statement is precise. Only the latter is true to the New Testament facts and to the Christian experience. Christ is not merely *like* God; He is God of God. The great issue settled by the Nicene Creed is that only a Saviour fully divine is adequate for the salvation of the world. Any idea of Christ as a semi-God is rejected. Over against Arius' reluctance, on the background of Greek philosophy, to think of ultimate Godhead having contact with the world, the Church insisted, on the basis of the Gospel facts, that the work of Christ in the world is that of the one true God; that He who reveals Himself in creation and redemption is God Himself and none other.

(iii) The controversies of the Nicene period enabled the Church to give clear expression to the truth that Christ (and the Holy Spirit) are truly and fully divine and that the one God has three eternal and personal distinctions. He is Father, Son, and Spirit; One God. In many ways it is a trinitarian controversy. However, the clarification of the meaning of Christ's divinity led on to new attention to His incarnate life. What was the relation of the human and divine in the one person of the Word made flesh? It seemed to some that the Nicene Creed made Christ appear to have two personalities. The Church had to find right expressions for the fact that in Christ there are two perfect natures and a real unity of person.

The period of Christological controversy began when Apollinarius, following another error of Arius, denied the full humanity of Christ. He taught that the manhood of Jesus consisted only of the body and animal life and that the Word took the place, in Him, of a human soul. Later, Eutyches also

denied real manhood to Christ by holding that at the Incarnation the human nature was changed into the divine. On the other hand, *Nestorius* exaggerated the separateness of the two natures, making Jesus two persons, divine and human, united only in will.

The two arguments represent two ways of looking at Jesus, characteristic of the rival schools of Alexandria and Antioch. The former regarded Him as the Son of God incarnate, the latter as the man in whom God dwelt. The one stressed the divinity and unity but obscured the humanity. The other stressed the humanity but by emphasising the two natures tended either to destroy the unity of His person or to maintain it by seeing Him as a man inspired by God.

Christian teaching was summed up at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 in what is perhaps the nearest human language can reach in saying who Christ is. After the struggle against theories the Christ was only a created being (*Arius*), or that the divine shared in an imperfect human nature (*Apollinarius*); or that Christ had two separate natures; (*Nestorius*); or that the divine nature absorbed the human (*Eutyches*) the faith was expressed thus:

Our Lord Jesus Christ is to us truly God and truly man ... co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, co-essential with us according to the Manhood, like us in all things except sin, one and the same Christ, acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.

The Council met the errors due to over-emphasis and preconceptions, by re-affirming the New Testament facts and holding both aspects of the truth in balance. It did not, however, make clear how the human and the divine are united in the person of Christ. Indeed, Chalcedon does not so much solve the problem as rule out wrong answers to it, by stating the facts clearly and in terms of the best thought of the day.

J. K. Mozley: *The Beginnings of Christian Thought*.

R. V. Sellars: *Two Ancient Christologies: The Council of Chalcedon*.

✓(iv) Between the Ecumenical Councils and the Reformation there was little development of doctrine, simply argu-

ment deduction, exposition on the basis of Chalcedon. Its consequences were summed up and expounded by John of Damascus in the East and by Thomas Aquinas in the West. The Reformers protested against theology using the methods of philosophy and broke the alliance between the two. They also recovered the sense of the importance of the Jesus of history, stressing the person revealed in the Gospels and making Him the sole principle of our knowledge of God. Since Chalcedon the human and divine in Christ had been kept apart; Luther brought them together again. From this much of the method and approach of the doctrine of the Person of Christ in the modern period has developed.

(v) The process of expressing the faith in doctrine goes on continually as fresh needs and new methods of expression arise. The problem of the person of Christ is one from which the Christian mind cannot retreat. In the first creative age of the Church a 'solution' was found in terms of the contemporary philosophy of substance and nature. The Chalcedonian *faith* has been accepted ever since by the great majority of Christians but its *terms* no longer satisfy. In modern speech the same words have new meanings and there are other new factors to consider e.g., the results of Biblical criticism and of psychological analysis.

The main tendencies represented by the schools of Alexandria and Antioch are represented respectively today by those who in doing justice to the conviction that Jesus is God tend to neglect the full reality of His manhood; and by those who so stress the historic facts as to give a merely humanitarian interpretation.

The old primary problem exists today in other term. How can one person be at once divinely omniscient and humanly limited in knowledge? This is behind the recent interest in the Kenotic Doctrine i.e., the attempt to expound, Phil. 2:7. It is clear that if God and man were united in the one person of Christ there must have been some voluntary suspension in the days of His flesh of such divine qualities e.g., omnipresence, as are not compatible with true humanity. We have seen how the early Church, holding to belief in the divinity of Christ without surrendering the Cross, reached a solution of its problem in the end. We need not fear to



take the Gospels at their word even if they suggest that the Son of God was subject to limitations when on earth.

Most modern accounts are attempts to say what the church has always said but in the language of today. What matters is that the account shall do such justice to all the facts as to be in harmony with Jesus' witness: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'; and with the Church's faith that He 'for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven'. Few today deny the manhood of Christ, and its supreme quality. Muslims honour Him as a prophet. Many Hindus are prepared to revere Him as the greatest so far born among mankind. The issue is whether He is something more; beyond what any man has been or can be; the only Son of God and Saviour of the world. The questions we have to answer are: What do we mean when we say God was in Christ reconciling? In what sense is He divine? How are we to think of His divinity and humanity combining in the life of one person? They are old questions but the old formulas of answer will no longer serve; we have to interpret the meaning of our faith for men today

J. M. Creed: *The Divinity of Jesus Christ*.

W. R. Matthews: *The Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century, Doctrine in the Church of England*, 72 ff.

Surjit Singh: *Preface to Personality*.

*Note:* The Athanasian Creed or 'Quicunque Vult' is disregarded by many because of a misunderstanding of the prefatory words regarding damnation and salvation. We should not, however ignore this very important statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation as formulated in the undivided Church. It will be a good exercise for the student to study the second part of this document, dealing with the person of Christ, on the background of the history of the era in which it was written and on which the terms are to be understood; and then to attempt to put it into his own language in terms which the people can follow.

## 6. IS JESUS AN AVATARA?

The comparative study of religion shows a fairly common belief that the gods, from time to time, descend from heaven to walk among men in human form. In particular, Hinduism teaches the personal appearing of God by divine descents—*avatāras*. The term has no exact meaning. It denotes



many kinds and degrees of the appearance of a god in the likeness of a physical body. It describes brief manifestations in illusory forms as well as the indwelling of a human body for a life-time. The primary reference is to the appearing on earth of Vishnu in ten principal forms: fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, Parasu Rama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.

It has been suggested that this is a development from the theology of the indwelling Brahman. In fact there is no place in monism for any special incarnations. Those who believe that the supreme Spirit exists in everything and that each individual is its embodiment have no reason to think of one rather than another as an incarnation. More probably the idea comes as a protest against Advaita and in the interests of the doctrine of personality in God and of personal distinctions between him and the worshippers. As such, it represents an attempt to combine the doctrines of impersonal Brahman and personal Lord. It is strongest among the Vaishnavas where it represents the demand of the heart that God be near and real to men.

The Avatāras of living importance for the Hindu today are those of Vishnu as Krishna and Rama. These were originally heroes whose doings are recorded in the epics. In the original *Mahabharata*, Krishna is a Rajput prince but in the *Bhagavadgita*, later inserted, he appears as the descent of Vishnu in human form. The poem owes its popularity as a book of devotion to its teaching that by *bhakti* towards Krishna as a personal god, the worshipper can be released from the chains of *karma-samsāra* and attain *moksha* in union with him. Similarly, the original *Ramayana* tells of the adventures of Rama, prince of Ayodhya, but in the later portions, he becomes an Avatāra of Vishnu, accepting privation for the sake of men. The *Ramayana* has become a devotional book through the exemplification, in Rama, of an ideal of life.

It is argued that Avatara doctrine of Hinduism resembles the Christian belief in divine incarnation and that Jesus can best be presented to the Hindu in such terms. There may be some points of superficial resemblance but the differences between the two doctrines are fundamental. We note in brief: (a) In contrast to the Christian doctrine of the supreme revelation of God in Christ, once and for all, there are the many recorded Avatāras and the promise of other

descends any time as need arises. (b) The Hindu doctrine says little about the relation between God in Himself and God incarnate—the problem which exercised Christian thought for so long. The amount of divinity in each Avatāra varies e.g., Rama is said to be half-Vishnu and his only full embodiment is in Krishna. (c) Both Epics set out to present a personal God of love and grace but they make no real break with Vedānta and ultimate deity remains impersonal. This differs from the Christian understanding that the revelation of God in Christ must determine the doctrine of God. (d) There is no clear and consistent concept of the purpose of Avatāra. Vishnu appears not to reveal the perfect life of God in human form but, in the *Bhagavadgita*, to solve a particular problem of conscience; and in the *Ramayana*, to live a life which shall inspire the Hindu with a deeper sense of the power of suffering to mature the life of the spirit. (e) The closest parallel to Jesus is Krishna but there is ultimately nothing in common between this example of the deification of a hero and the Christian doctrine of the taking of flesh by the pre-existent Son of God. Krishna utters what many regard as the highest teaching of all. We may well accept the nobility of e.g., ‘to protect the saints, to destroy evildoers, to establish *dharma*...’, but there seems little connection between this and what is recorded of Krishna in the Purāṇas. The fact is that for the Hindu the distinctive personality of Krishna does not matter, but for the Christian that of Jesus is all important. As for the Hindu Krishna is him in whom God is revealed, so is Jesus for the Christian. We adore, however, not the God in Jesus, but Jesus Himself.

For these reasons *Avatāra* is a word to be used with care and caution, and with a clear understanding of what is meant by *Incarnation*. For the Hindu ‘Avatāra is a temporary intervention of the Divine which is made in a guise that is a disguise, and which is intrinsically repeatable in other disguises,’ (Hogg). For the Christian, Incarnation means ‘that God’s very self dwelt among men in a real human body, with a complete human nature, under the ordinary conditions of our humanity and subject to righteousness, for a moral purpose—the deliverance of men from the bondage of sin and the leading of them into a nobler life. It has often been said that whereas Christianity speaks of but one incar-

nation, Hinduism knows many incarnations. Hindus must consider afresh whether, in the Christian sense of the word, a manifestation in time and space of the Godhead in a real humanity for an ethical purpose of universal scope, Hinduism knows of even one incarnation' (Thompson).

The consideration of Avatāra underlines two important points for the presentation of the doctrine of the Incarnation in India.

✓(i) The mythological character of the Hindu Avatāras makes it all the more necessary to emphasize the historicity of Jesus. The story of an incarnation tells of something that has happened in the world of time and space. No legend can be an account of an incarnation. It is an event which declares that God has, in fact, entered this world. To equate Krishna with Christ is to confuse what happens in the imagination with what has happened in fact. To argue that Krishna is the incarnation of God for the Hindu as is Jesus for the Christian and then to ignore the question of Krishna's historicity is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as an unhistorical incarnation.

✓(ii) The consideration of the Hindu tradition concerning the Avatāras stresses the fact that no religion has in fact, attained to the truth which God has revealed in sending His Son to earth. The revelation that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself is the supreme manifestation of redeeming love. The Gospel proclaims that in this world, which has gone so far from what God purposed for it but in which He has never left Himself without witness, He Himself appeared in the person of One sharing to the full our human nature. This is an event unique, final and incapable of repetition. The incarnate Christ, whom we are called to offer to all men as their Lord and Saviour, represents the unique intervention of God which determines, once and for all, the course of the history of the world. In Him God has given the unsurpassable revelation, in time and fact, of His character and purpose.

E. W. Thompson: *The Word of the Cross to Hindus*—especially 131 ff.

A. G. Hogg: *The Christian Message to the Hindu*, 33 ff.

Sargant and Ward: *W. E. Tomlinson*, Part II, 77 ff.

V. Chakkarai: *Jesus the Avātar*.

*Reports of the Jerusalem 1928 and Tambaram 1939 Conferences*

## 7. WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF CHRIST?

It is not difficult to persuade men that Jesus lived on earth as the best of men. The great issue is whether this good man is what Christians claim Him to be—the true and only Incarnation of God. How are we to help those to whom we are sent, to pass from respect, even veneration, for His character to worship of His person?

We have to proclaim that this real man is also truly God, and that He is what He is because He is God. He is not God because He was perfect man. He is and always was God. He became man. We have to confess our knowledge that never man spoke or acted like this man; that in His own person He has brought God to us and us to God. We have to show that His own word as in John 14:9 is the exact account of the experience set out in 2 Cor. 5:14 ff. and interpreted in Phil. 2:6 ff.; and to make, as clear as may be, what we mean when we say of Jesus: 'begotten before all worlds'; 'of one substance with the Father', etc.

To do all this is no easy task. It raises problems for the mind both of teacher and taught. Let us never forget that faith does not wait upon the solution of the intellectual problems. We know something of the great realities of the transforming power of Christ to which the history of the Church bears witness for it has been confirmed in our experience and has constrained our confession: My Lord and My God. We can testify that it is as we follow Him, even while problems persist, that we learn most fully to adore Him. Again, no one can say: Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit, (1 Cor. 12:3) yet nothing is more certain than that God sends His Spirit to interpret Christ to those who seek Him.

As we gather up the witness of Scripture, the evidence of the life of the Church down the years, and the testimony of the Spirit speaking to us today, certain great truths stand out.

(i) The Christian explanation of Jesus is grounded in the experience that in Him God has become real to men. The Incarnation belongs to the activity of God in history and is therefore both fact and act. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. In this man we know God to be the living, loving, redeeming Father. What was set out in the New

Testament has been verified ever since in the constant experience of Christians. Then what is His relation to the One whom He called Father? It was in answering this that the Church reached the knowledge that there are eternal distinctions in the Godhead. So soon as men called Jesus Lord, the doctrine of the Trinity began to take shape. We know God as Father through worshipping the Son who said: He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and who claimed to be wholly from the Father. The fact abides that in our thought about God, the Father and the Son can hardly be distinguished. Moreover, He is what He is for all men because He is Son of Man. In Him every man can be united in fellowship with the Father. The implications of this will be gathered up later when we come to consider the doctrine of the Trinity, but for the moment it is part of the evidence we bring to answering the question concerning Jesus.

(ii) The belief that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God is at the very heart of the Gospel. Apart from this, Christianity is no Gospel. It might provide an example to imitate but would have no saving truth to declare; no new power to impart; no gifts to bestow. It would merely tell the story of another martyr—a man, wise and gracious, who went about doing good and met an undeserved fate. As such it would merely make the problem of evil more poignant than ever and widen further the distance between man's lowest and highest achievement. Think of the violent contrast at Calvary between the men who crucified Jesus and Him whom they crucified. In them we see how low human nature can fall and in Him how high it can rise. If the Christian claim be rejected how are we to know what is the truth about man? We who are so like those men know how far we are from God and how liable we are to sin. We know that if we are to be like the Man we need, not an example outside us, but a power within us. We have no ground for hope unless Christ be what the New Testament declares Him to be—God become perfect man that He may restore imperfect men to his likeness. Knowing that, we are certain also that God is love even to giving Himself as a sacrifice to save and win men. If Jesus be Lord there is good news of power of God unto salvation, but not otherwise. All that we have to say later

about the way of Atonement rests upon what we now confess concerning the person of the Saviour.

(iii) From the understanding of who Jesus is we can infer the nature of His present work for us in Heaven. He who sits exalted at the right hand of the Father is Jesus. Our Brother-Man is our High Priest before God, active for us in intercession which is effective because of what He did. He is the mediator of all grace and in His name we pray. So we confess His essential authority and sovereignty, and His effective power to help. He did not go, at the Ascension, into heavenly retirement. He sits at the right hand of God as conqueror of sin and death, and His victory's permanent. Christians tend to look back to the Jesus who once lived and even to think of the Resurrection as a fact of long ago. But even now He is overcoming evil and ruling mankind, helping us in every need and representing us before God. This is true even though many men do not yet know it, and others doubt or deny it. It means, moreover, that He will return in triumph to judge in the Last Day when all His work for men, and in them, will come to final issue.

We believe that from the beginning God has been speaking to men: in historical crisis, by revelation to those He inspired to her His Word, by the Spirit lighting every man. But the climax of God's self-imparting came in the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh. Ever since, Christ continues to come in all the crises and processes of history and of individual life. He comes now to judge and to save, perchance to save by judging. That the work is His is recognized only by those who believe in Him; not yet is the fact of His Lordship fully manifest. But in the day of His final coming the process will be consummated in the final and visible revelation of things as they really are. His standards will at last wholly prevail and all that is contrary to them will perish. The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ will be seen as the truth of mankind and God will be all in all. All this we confess when we acknowledge Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

We have seen how the first Christians were led to confess and worship Jesus as Lord. Their personal knowledge of His redeeming word and risen presence constrained the belief that His words, works and being were of God. His effect on men



was of One coming to them from within God, never as one who had earned a place with God. Only the fact that He is divine accounted for the forgiveness and reconciliation they experienced in the life of fellowship with Him by faith. So it has always been. What He does reveals who He is; who He is gives meaning to what He does. We interpret His person in the light of His work. Luther expresses the common Christian mind when he says; 'Christ is not named Christ because He has two natures but He bears His lordly and comforting names because of the office and work He has taken on Himself. He has redeemed me. The little word *Lord* taken in its simplest sense means as much as Redeemer; that is, He who has led us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness—and holds us safe'.

It has never been the Christian way to set to and deliberately prove that Jesus is God. When we begin to argue with men we shall not find it easy to persuade them that the supreme and final revelation of God came by one who lived as a Jewish peasant and was crucified. But if we persuade them to hear and read the Gospel story we may expect them to be convinced, as we have been, that if ever there was an Incarnation of God on earth, this is it. There are deep mysteries in the manner and method of the Incarnation but the heart of the matter, that God came in Christ to meet men in their predicament, is something that any man may be glad to receive and by it to live. Here is a message that deals with a situation that actually exists and deals with it in the only way which makes sense of the problems and mysteries of life.

All down the Christian years, and in every area of the world, are men and women who have taken Jesus at His word and have found salvation through His name. They have been unable to stop short of the belief that He is God. There is no other conclusion to account for all the facts, from the New Testament until now. We can make our own the conviction recorded by Bishop Neill that 'any one who starts with any kind of regard for Jesus Christ and loyalty to Him, and allows the record of the Bible to play on an unprejudiced mind will find that he is being gradually led to give Jesus a higher and higher place until at last he is led to see Him where the Church has always seen Him, within the very being of the Godhead—the Word of God who was from the



beginning with the Father, who wrought in the world, who was made flesh for us and is now and eternally one with the everlasting Father'.

Luther put the challenge of the fact of Christ in one pregnant sentence: 'We are undone if this man be not God'. He added: 'But now'—and what a wealth of meaning is in these words—'we have a gracious God'. As we proceed we shall learn more and more of what this revelation in Christ means for the knowledge and service of God. The next step is to consider what we mean when we say what we know God in Christ *through the Holy Spirit*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### 1. A NEGLECTED DOCTRINE

WE sometimes say, perhaps without thinking very deeply, that the Gospel ends with the Ascension. To correct this opinion we should turn again to the end of the Third Gospel and the beginning of the Acts where the Ascension of Jesus Christ is followed by the descent of God the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Luke links the Ascension rather with what followed than with what preceded it. From him it is not so much the ending of the Gospel as the beginning of the story of the Church. His narrative of all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when He was received up continues with the coming and the work of that 'other Comforter, whom Jesus had promised to send, John 14:16 ff.; 25ff.; 15:26; 16:7. As we have said in another context: Jesus Christ went up; the Holy Spirit came down; the Church went out—and continues to go forth.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is part of the whole of God which is the theme of this book. Our concern is to understand what it means to believe in the Living God whom Jesus has made known as the Father. In this chapter we are to consider the manner and the method of the presence and activity of God in the world which He has made and redeemed. We noted above the futility of resting in some vague idea that there is a God. In our study of the person of Christ we have moved far from this. We need, however, to be on guard also against the temptation to be content merely to look back to the example of the life once lived when God took flesh among us. From this we are saved by God's revelation of Himself as present and active now. We shall best approach the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by holding fast to the truth that He is God in action in human life.

There is an instructive story in Acts 18:24 ff.; of a Jew named Apollos who had learned and was teaching the facts about Jesus but who knew only the baptism of John. When

Paul met some of those whom Apollos had led to Jesus and asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, they replied: 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit'. They are typical of many for whom the Father and Jesus mean a great deal but the Holy Spirit little or nothing. Yet, as we shall see, there is a world of difference between the Apollos type of religion and that represented by Paul.

Present day uncertainty as to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the lack of conscious experience of His presence and power, are reflected in the manner in which many Christians observe Whitsuntide as compared with other great days of the Christian Year. This is a symptom of the neglect and misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is the source of much religious weakness. There is much worship focused on a God regarded as remote from man and on a Christ enshrined in ancient history, to the detriment of life and witness. We need the experience of God in action, quickening men's understanding of contemporary events, rousing them out of contentment with established ways and accepted solutions, and doing this by driving them to think through their apprehension of the mind of Christ to the point at which it speaks to man's present need. It is the work of the Spirit to supply this; but how many Christians really know it?

Speaking to the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, President Eisenhower said: 'We are desperately in need of a lifting and transforming power to help change men'. That it should be possible for that to be said to such a gathering implies a great rebuke. We do well to recognize that in so far as the Church has failed to mediate to the world the inspiration which God is always freely offering, it is due in the main to the neglect of the doctrine and practice of the Holy Spirit. It is no exaggeration to say that whenever the Church has been lacking in inward vigour and ineffective in witness to the world it is because of confusion and error regarding the meaning of belief in the Holy Spirit.

It is possible to agree that we need a full and clear account of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and yet to doubt our ability to declare in human speech Him who is Lord and Life Giver.

How can men discern and express the being of One who is not an object of knowledge as is the incarnate Christ, but is Himself the source of knowledge and the light in which truth is known? The Spirit Himself meets this need. The Christian cannot share the Hindu conviction that his destiny is set in a union with the Supreme Spirit which can neither be imagined nor characterized, for he believes that what the eye cannot see or the ear hear, God reveals to him by His Holy Spirit. The Incarnation is unique and unrepeatable but it does not mark the end of God's gracious dealing with men. He continues to work, in an infinite variety of ways, through lives open to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus returned to the Father He assured His disciples that He would not leave them orphans. That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; and it is still being fulfilled. William Carey's word: 'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God' has had no small influence on the piety of the Church in India. It implies the belief that when God calls men to work for Him, He empowers them to do what they could not do in their own strength. We do not claim to be able to do great things but we believe that God can do them through us. This is one way of saying: *I believe in the Holy Spirit.*

At this point the student is advised to turn to some of the principal passage of Scripture concerning the Spirit, e.g., Isa. 11:2; Ezek. 36:26 f.; 37:1 ff.; Matt. 1:20; 12:9 ff.; Mark 1:9 ff.; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:25 f.; 15:26 f.; 16:5 ff.; Acts 2; Rom. 8:4 ff.; I Cor. 2:1-3:17; 6:19; 12:1 ff.; Gal. 5:17 ff. On the basis of this revelation we confess belief in { the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life Giver; who spoke by the Prophets; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. By this we mean that God the Holy Spirit is the true presence and power of the Living God. He has been from the beginning the source of all that is good and true, but He was first fully revealed at Pentecost as the divine person who continues and fulfils the work of Christ for the world in the life of the Church and the believer. There is a useful summary of the doctrine in the *Short Statement of the Faith* published by the Church of Scotland:

*Summary*

The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. By the power of the Holy Spirit God has ever been present in the lives of men, seeking them for Himself, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty. By the same power, God brings them to Himself through Jesus Christ that they may acknowledge their sin, receive His forgiveness, and become His sons and heirs of eternal life. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit given by Christ the fellowship of the Church is created and its members receive a new power to grow into the likeness of their Lord, to overcome sin, to love one another, and to labour and pray for the coming of His Kingdom.

It is good to recognize at the outset that this doctrine is wholly Biblical and that it relates to the everyday experience of the common man who bears the ordinary burdens, faces the ordinary problems and struggles with the ordinary sins, and brings to him an extraordinary power. In our study we shall meet with many difficulties but they all concern the realities of life. The doctrine is vital to effective religion. As we consider it we shall touch on many aspects of Christian belief, experience and action. Thus for example, as Dr. Quick has shown, problems regarding authority and freedom, dogma and experience, the ecclesiastical and the personal aspects of religion, the relation of the Church to the world, of the Gospel to others faiths, and that between sacred and secular—matters which are the subject of much controversy—all find their solution in the truth of which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the expression. When theological discussion is controlled by the knowledge that Christianity involves the relation of free spirits to the personal divine Spirit the way is open to the answering of many perplexing questions.

It is as we learn to confess belief in the Holy Spirit, with full conviction, and as expressing the faith by which we live, that we are enabled not merely to look back to God's great deeds in the past and to a Christ who was, but to know Him now and to look forward in expectancy that God will bless, endow, guide, restore. This chapter is written in the conviction that what happened in the first century, with such great results, can surely happen today by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reading should certainly begin with J. E. Fison: *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit*, written with a sense of urgency and bearing the true prophetic note. An excellent summary of the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit is in *Doctrine in the Church of England* 93 ff. Its implications can be followed up by the fairly simple expositions of T. Rees: *The Holy Spirit* F. A. Cockin: *The Holy Spirit and the Church* and W. Barclay: *The Promise of the Spirit*. There is much excellent material in the four lectures on *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* written by the Staff of Headingly College. The last two books relate the doctrine on the one hand to the Church and on the other hand to the Trinity. A. M. Hollis: *The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit* reflects something of the new understanding of the work of the Spirit which has come to the Church of South India since union. The section on the Holy Spirit in the third statement of C.S.I.—*Lutheran Conversations* should be studied. For more advanced reading three books are outstanding, A. L. Humphries: *The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience*; H. Wheeler Robinson: *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*; and E. Schweizer: *Spirit of God*. Other useful studies are: E. Underhill: *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today*, which brings the traditional experience into line with the modern psychological categories, F.W. Dillistone: *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today*, which stands firm on the Biblical basis and applies the work of the Spirit to human life now, A. J. Macdonald: *The Interpreter Spirit and Human Life* which gives special attention to the inter-testamental writings, especially 'Wisdom'. Note also E. L. Strong: *The Revelation of the Holy Spirit* and F. W. Camfield: *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*. L. Hodgson: *The Doctrine of the Trinity* has many important things to say about the Holy Spirit. Other books are mentioned at appropriate places in the text.

## 2. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

In common speech *spirit* has many meanings derived from many sources and *spiritual* is a very ambiguous term. We are concerned with the characteristic Christian use which is wholly Biblical and has its roots in the great Old Testament word RUACH. In Ezek. 37:1 ff. this word is translated variously as spirit, wind, breath. All are correct renderings. The primary meaning is wind—the strong desert wind. This mighty invasive power suggested the idea of supernatural energy in God and man, 2 Sam. 22:16; 1 Kings 10:5; 18:12. Ezekiel means that the lifeless bodies of Israel can become vital forces again only if the wind of God blows and brings them to life again. Spirit, unseen, mobile strong like the wind, is one of the manifestations of the presence of God. 'The

primitive and fundamental idea of spirit in the Old Testament is that of active power or energy; power, superhuman, mysterious, elusive, of which the wind of the desert was not so much the symbol as the familiar example' (H. W. Robinson).

RUACH also means breath in the sense of the vital energy of God which is the source of the higher life in man, Ps. 104:29 f.; Ezek. 37. It is not to be confused with other words for breath which constitute the principle of ordinary life in man, Gen. 2:7 ff. There is always something supernatural about it. Thus in man it is not the steady breathing under his control but the violent breathing which controls him, Num. 5:14; Prov. 16:32. There are some Christian hymns which speak of the breath of God but they do not always suggest the Old Testament belief that when God breathes His Spirit into a man it is powerful as the gale. It is, for example, unfortunate that 'O Breath of God breathe on us now' should be associated with a tune called 'Calm'.

When Ezekiel equated the Spirit with the hand of the Lord he stressed the fact that spirit means power. We have seen that in the Old Testament God is always the One who does rather than the One who is. This is clearly illustrated in the idea of His Spirit which is always the activity rather than the attribute of God. It is the divine working rather than the divine being which is spiritual. Before Amos the stress was on supernatural, even demonic, power rather than divine. The work of spirit was seen whenever men exceeded their natural powers both for good and evil. Thus the spirit enabled the Judges to perform their feats but an evil spirit made the people unfaithful e.g., Num. 14:24; Jud. 9:23 cf. Hos. 4:12; 5:4. After the establishment of monotheism, however, it was seen that Yahweh was the only source of power and that every thing supernatural was under His control. Only through His Spirit was the energy of the one God conveyed, whether in creation or especially in and through the lives of men, Gen. 1:2 f.; Isa. 11:2 f.; 61:1; Joel 2:28 f.

By the power of the Spirit men were enabled to do what otherwise they could not have done. All outstanding accomplishments were due to the Spirit, from the lower level of e.g., 1 Sam. 10:6 ff.; 19:20 f.; 2 Kings 3:15 to the higher levels of e.g., Gen. 41:38; Ex. 31:3; 35:31; 36:1 f.; Num.



24:2; Jud. 3:9 f.; 6:34 (R.V. margin); 13:25; 14:6; 1 Sam. 11:5 ff.; Isa. 11:2. In no case were these deeds done by some enlargement of man's natural power but by the Spirit coming as the gift of God from above and outside to possess, animate and inspire the men. The Spirit comes upon the men chosen to serve God in special ways, equipping them with special talents and enabling them to do abnormal deeds.

Above all the Spirit of the Lord 'spoke by the Prophets', inspiring chosen men to declare the Word of God concerning righteousness, judgment and salvation. The Old Testament never uses the word *inbreathing* of prophetic inspiration. The Spirit comes upon, not into, a man and compels him to speak. In early days the note of *ecstasy* is strong, 1 Sam. 10; cf. Hos. 9:7, but even then the Prophet was marked out as one who stood for Yahweh against Baal and whose calling it was to declare the will of God to the rulers. Later the ethical note is stronger and the Spirit enables the Prophets to speak the Word of God in truth, Neh. 9:30; Isa. 42:1; 61:1; Ezek. 11:5 ff.; Mic. 3:8 ff.; Zech. 4:6. They declared God's promises of a new age marked by the coming of Messiah and the gift of a new kind of life, pure, holy, obedient and in blessed communion with God and man. On Messiah will the Spirit rest; and it is to bring in the new age, Isa. 11:1 ff.; 32:15; 44:3 ff.; 63:10 ff.; Ezek. 36:26 f.; Hag. 2:4 ff.; Zech. 12:10. They looked forward to the time when the Spirit should no longer be a gift to few but should be poured out upon all the People of God, and the Law of the Lord should be written on every heart, Joel 2:28 ff.; Jer. 31:31 ff.; cf. Num. 11:29. That day, however, lay in the future. In the Old Testament, as Vidler sums up, 'the work of the Holy Spirit was regarded primarily as an occasional, irregular, spasmodic output of divine energy in human life, which from time to time took hold of individual men and raised them to an exceptional level of insight or activity beyond the scope of normal human capacity'.

In the Old Testament *holy* refers primarily to the aweful separateness, characteristic of God, and to the men and things set apart for Him in a special way. The word is used of the Spirit only in Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10 f.; but there is no doubt that it always applies to the Spirit which is of God and not of man. It stresses the divine, supernatural and abnormal

character of Spirit and the separation of its activity from the merely human, natural and ordinary. This point is underlined by the contrast between Spirit and flesh. This is not the modern contrast between spirit and matter, but between that which is from above, the source of life and power, and that which is from below, e.g., Isa. 31:3.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit is *IT* not *HE*, i.e., not personal. Towards the end of the period there are slight suggestions of personalization e.g., Ps. 139:7; Isa. 34:16; 48:16 but in general the Spirit is personal only as being the living energy of a personal God. Although the Spirit is more nearly identified with God than are His other manifestations e.g., Wisdom *passim* Ps. 139:7 ff.; Isa. 48:16; Ezek. 1:12; Hag. 2:5, there is no suggestion of the Spirit being a personal distinction in the Godhead.

In the creation story the Spirit of God is said to have hovered over the waters, Gen. 1:2. This association of the Spirit with matter rather than with men is unusual. It raises the question of the indwelling of God in the world. We note that the Spirit hovered *over* the waters but not *in* them. This is in line with the Old Testament teaching that the Spirit stands for action rather than immanence; the power is invasive not pervasive. So, when the Psalmist speaks of the omnipresence of the Spirit he is thinking of God's care for men in every circumstance and not of a divine spark in all creation. Ps. 139 cf. Wisdom of Solomon 1:7; 12:1.

For the Hebrew the presence of God is always His activity. In Pss. 51:11; 139:7 the Spirit and the presence are almost identical and the later Prophets suggest that the presence of God with Israel as the unseen Friend implies the dwelling of the Spirit in their midst. It is not easy to distinguish between an omnipresent person and an indwelling presence but the former is clearly the dominant idea of the Old Testament. It was the sense, in later days, of the need to lessen the direct contact of God with men which led them to say that it is the Spirit of God which indwells, Ps. 104:30; Job. 32:8; Prov. 20:27; Isa. 63:10 ff.; Jer. 23:24; Hag. 2:4. ff. Although Ps. 139:7 f. does hint that God indwells the universe by His Spirit, the strong ethical note limits the idea of universal indwelling so that it is never regarded as something which necessarily prevades the world. The presence of God is

indeed the expression of His free grace and wide goodwill, but the righteous God grants it in full only to the humble and righteous, Isa. 57:15.

The idea of an essential divine immanence is not found in the Old Testament but in the Judaism of the Dispersion where an attempt was made to combine the Old Testament with Greek philosophy. The Wisdom of Solomon has a doctrine of the divine indwelling as something inherent in the nature of things which is more Greek than Hebrew. The writer identifies the Spirit of the Lord with the world soul of the Stoics (cf. Atman) and holds that the spirit which prevades all things is the same power which makes holy men friends of God and prophets, Wisdom, 7:22 ff.; 11:1. 'In this attempt', writes Snaith, 'due to Hellenistic influence, of the author of Wisdom to fit his religion into his philosophy, we have the beginning of a movement which has confused religion with philosophy. From it spring the errors of humanism, and the dangerous, we believe erroneous, identification of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men with the power that makes the grass grow green'. It has been suggested that the Jewish doctrine of the Holy Spirit may be enlarged with the idea, which approaches near to the personal, of the divine Wisdom. To do so is to move from the true Biblical teaching to the kind of world soul described in the Book of Wisdom. Christianity does not take this road. Its Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. The enlarging of the Old Testament doctrine had to wait till Messiah came.

N. H. Snaith: Chapter 1 in the *Headingley Lectures* on the Holy Spirit.

### 3. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND JESUS

The New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit has its roots in the Old Testament and yet it goes far beyond what is there taught. The first contrast we note is that whereas the Messianic references in the Old Testament are only a part of the doctrine, in the New Testament everything concerning the Spirit is linked with the life and work of the Messiah who came. In the Synoptic Gospels the references

to the Holy Spirit are comparatively few—Matt. 1:18, 20; 12:18, 28; Mark 1:8 ff.; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10 ff. constitute the bulk of the evidence. This has led some to depreciate the significance of the life and work of Jesus for the doctrine of the Spirit. Nothing could be wider of the mark.

(a) The coming of Christ in flesh is the work of the Spirit. The whole circle of persons associated with His birth was, in varying degrees, touched by the Spirit. By the Spirit Mary was empowered to become the mother of Him who was the Son of God, Matt. 1:18 ff.; Luke 1:5 ff.

(b) The work of Jesus is in and through the Holy Spirit which, from His baptism onwards, is the divine power making Him mighty in word and deed. The Spirit descended on Him at baptism with power to equip Him to be Messiah and Servant of the Lord, Mark 1:8 ff.; cf. Acts 10:38. Henceforth the Spirit is the abiding power of His ministry. To say that He was filled with the Spirit was to say He was full of grace and truth. By the Spirit He was led into the wilderness to be tempted and to overcome, Matt. 4:1 ff. It had been said of the coming Messiah that the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon Him. Jesus began His work by quoting these words and proclaiming their fulfilment in Him, Isa. 61:1; cf. 11:12; Luke 4:17 ff. By the Spirit He cast out devils, wrought miracles, and was raised from the dead: all signs of the new age, pointing to the great outpouring about to fall on mankind through His work, when He should baptize with Holy Spirit. This, however, is not merely a promise for the future; it has already begun. The work of the Spirit in Jesus is not merely the outstanding example of the Old Testament teaching that the Spirit is given only to special men for special purposes. In the teaching of Jesus there is a great enlargement. It is part of the Gospel that henceforth the gift is no longer to be limited to the abnormal but is to be bestowed by the Father on all His children. Any good father, says Jesus, provides His children with the ordinary needs of everyday. Will not the Heavenly Father do the same in supplying what His children need by giving them the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:11 ff.; cf. Matt. 10:20; Luke 12:12.

The fact that Jesus taught that the indwelling of the Spirit of God is to be regarded as a normal and not extraordinary

experience does not imply that human nature as such is essentially one with the divine. The Spirit is given subject to certain conditions; to those who are the children of God; in response to a definite request; to guide in a special emergency. Jesus never spoke as if the divine indwelling could be in a man without his knowledge or irrespective of conscious faith. Nor have we Jesus' authority to think that the divine Spirit is immanent in all creation. He certainly taught that nature is the handiwork of God, the reflection of His glory and the object of His care. He Himself wielded superhuman control over natural forces. But this divine control *over* nature is very different from the Hindu doctrine of the divine immanence *in* nature.

The reference to the sin against the Holy Spirit, Mark 3:28 ff.; Luke 12:10, which has caused difficulty to many, becomes clear when it is read in its context. Religious leaders jealous of Jesus and angry because He had no proper authority, as they understood it, ascribed His wonderful works to the power of the devil. They saw light and called it darkness. This kind of sin is unforgivable because the proud impenitent men who commit it are not open to receive forgiveness.

In the days of Jesus' earthly ministry there is still a limitation. Until His death, rising again and ascension, the presence and power of the Spirit were confined to Palestine. The fulness of the gift awaited the glorification of Jesus. Then only could He send the Spirit upon all. Here we must take a first look at the teaching of John e.g., 1:32 f.; 3:5 ff.; 6:63; 7:39; 14:15 ff.; 15:18 ff.; 16:5 ff.; 20:22 f.; cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:1 ff.; 5:1 ff. John also teaches that the Spirit is given to Jesus at baptism and that He is to give the Spirit to others. The story in 20:22 f. is peculiar to John. He also introduces a new term *Paraclete* i.e., one called in to help. The original use was for the advocate who defended the legal rights of those who were not citizens. Hence it came to mean a friend in need. In John the 'Comforter' comes to plead God's cause among the disciples and in the world. Jesus' promise that they would not be left forlorn but that God would send another 'Helper' to be with them always, explains why, at the Ascension, the disciples showed no sense of loss. They believed His promise that this would happen and waited quietly for its fulfilment.

#### 4. THE DAY OF PENTECOST

The Apostolic Age opens with the important event described in Acts 2. This was regarded as the fulfilment of the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit in the Messianic Age and of the prophecy of John Baptist e.g., Mark 1:8. The evidence of all that happened later confirmed this belief. Luke could do no other than begin his record of the *acts* of the men of the New Covenant with this story. Every page that follows reflects the deep sense of being under the power and direction of the Spirit. The details of the event may be difficult to understand, but there is no doubt that at the first celebration of this ancient Jewish festival after the Ascension the apostolic circle of Jerusalem had a deeply moving experience of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Henceforth, as the whole New Testament makes clear, Christians knew the Spirit to be present, in the Church and in the individual believer, in the fulness of power. From the day of Pentecost onwards the new knowledge of the divine presence which followed the reception of the Holy Spirit made this gift the supreme reality of life. So real and unquestionable was the experience that anyone writing or speaking to his fellow Christians could assume it as a fact which no one would doubt and on which he could base any argument e.g., Phil. 2:1.

It is not easy to visualize and understand exactly what happened on that day in Jerusalem. The outward signs were a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire, both symbols of the Spirit of the Lord. The immediate effect was to drive the disciples out into the open to bear compelling witness to the power of God. As they gave excited utterance, by-standers seemed to catch phrases in many languages. Some took it to be the effect of strong drink but the more discerning saw it to be religious fervour. It was, however, no mere momentary and unfruitful ecstasy, but power from on high which had permanent results in creating the fellowship of the Church and transforming the lives of its members. Peter, referring to the prophecy of Joel that when Messiah had come the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, said: this is that. Messiah had accomplished His earthly mission

and had withdrawn His bodily presence. Here was the clear fulfilment of His promise to send the Other Comforter.

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost turned a group of perplexed individuals into a confident community sharing a single purpose. Pentecost has been called the birthday of the Christian Church. This is true in the sense that the action of the Spirit incorporated the disciples into the Fellowship of the Body of Christ and empowered it to fulfil the purposes for which, from Abraham onwards, God had called Israel into being. From this day onward the Spirit enabled the members of the Church to 'see Jesus' as never before and sent them out to proclaim the Gospel to all the world. Henceforth the life of the Christian and of the Church was so filled with the Spirit as to enable the new Israel to out-live, out-think and out-die the pagan world. Nor was the power of the Spirit weakened by being dispersed as the Gospel spread among the nations. It has been well said that as the Resurrection was the demonstration outside of the victory of God in Christ, so Pentecost was the victory inside making new men in Christ. It is no wonder that henceforth the Spirit is the dominant concept of the New Testament.

From Pentecost onwards to have received the Spirit was the distinctive mark of the Christian and the reception of the gift was associated with baptism. It was always a supernatural gift and never a natural process—a new creation by the grace of God. Indeed the simplest definition of a Christian is 'one who has received the Holy Spirit', Acts 19:1 ff.; Rom. 8:9f.; Gal. 3:2 ff.

The new experience of the gift of the Spirit, although not limited to Jews but open to all believers in Christ, is however regarded in the New Testament almost as the monopoly of Christians. Nothing is said of the universal presence and activity of the Spirit. The only references to the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament are as regards the inspiration of the Prophets who foretold the sufferings and triumph of Christ. All other references concern the work of the Spirit in the conception and ministry of Jesus, and as guide, teacher and giver of power in the Church.

This limitation of the activity of the Holy Spirit to the sphere of Christ, and the ignoring of the Spirit's relation to the universe and to godly non-Christians, seemed unreasonable.



to both Jews and Gentiles in the first century and it has caused offence ever since. Nothing, however, bears clearer witness to the unique impression produced by the Gospel facts, in the light of Pentecost, on the followers of Jesus. The same Spirit of God is at work before and after Christ, but Pentecost gave such deep enlargement of understanding that Christians tended to speak as if this were the first revelation of the Spirit. Vidler sums it up by pointing out that whereas formerly the activity of the Spirit of the Lord was outward, spasmodic, individual, and national after Pentecost it became inward, permanent, corporate, and the gift was offered to men of any nation who should believe in Jesus as Lord. Moreover, the impersonal Spirit of the Lord, now often called the Spirit of Jesus, becomes HE not IT.

Before we go on to consider the New Testament teaching in detail it would be well to study what is said about the Spirit in Acts with the help of a concordance. Other references useful at this point are, Heb. 2:4 f.; 3:7; 6:4; 9:14; 10:29; Jas. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:2, 11; 4:14; 2 Peter. 1:21; Jude 19 f.; Rev. 2:7; 22:17. The contribution of Paul and John will be summed up later.

In his book *The Household of God*, Bishop Newbigin after discussing the 'Protestant' conception of the Church as the congregation of the faithful and the 'Catholic' idea of the Body of Christ, turns to a third type of approach: the 'Pentecostal' stress on the Church as the community of the Holy Spirit. In bringing this fact into the open, the Bishop has done good service. This third category of churchmanship is becoming of increasing importance and not least in India. *Pentecostalism* has many expressions and organizations. In general, it represents a movement which seeks to reproduce, in the life of the Church today, the pattern and vigour of the early Church. It lays particular stress on the miraculous gifts of speaking with tongues, prophecy, and healing associated with the day of Pentecost and the years following. In common speech in many parts of India 'Pentecostal' congregations are referred to as 'the Holy Spirit Church', perhaps with the implication that others are not!

The pattern is familiar in the history of the Church. From time to time the 'going' Church neglects an important element of the Creed. Then some arise to recover the loss.

Often, in so doing, they concentrate on the one element and do scant justice to the rest of the faith. Sometimes they separate themselves into a sect. In all this there is something to deplore, but something also from which to learn. Thus the Pentecostal sects of today have many regrettable features but they do bring under judgment the inadequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit held by many Christians. How little of the thrill of Acts 2 is reflected in the celebrations among us of Whitsunday. Our very vagueness about the event tends to keep it in the distant past. But the Pentecostalists, for all their faults, do say: 'Souls for my hire and Pentecost today'. They challenge us to re-think what we mean by belief in the Holy Spirit and to consider the sense in which every Christian ought to be a 'Pentecostalist'.

We cannot deny that there were, in the early Church, abnormal and dramatic events. The coming of the Spirit led to many of the exciting expressions of spiritual fervour which we associate with 'revival meetings'. The question to consider is whether such things are necessary to the reception of the gift of the Spirit, as many Pentecostalists claim; or whether these things are occasional and temporary; the real evidence being found in some permanent, but not necessarily dramatic and even noisy, change. We should remember that the *gift* of the Spirit Himself is one thing and is not to be confused with the many gifts which He imparts to men, as He wills, to enable them to do the work He requires of them.

The reception of the Spirit was accompanied sometimes, but not always, in New Testament days by startling manifestations similar to those on the day of Pentecost. At Corinth, for example, dramatic scenes tended to be a regular part of worship. Members of the congregation were inspired to shout, often several together, in language which others could not understand. If reproved they said that they could not control or subdue the Spirit even though they seemed to outsiders to be mad. Again, from Pentecost onwards the long-lost gift of prophecy returned to the Church enabling witness to be borne to Jesus as Lord. Also, in the power of the Spirit, many miracles of healing were wrought. Because these works are more visibly remarkable it is easy, then and now, to attach the greater importance to them, and even to identify the gift of the Spirit with them. We shall now

consider in detail the facts concerning speaking with tongues and prophecy, and then go on to see what are the other effects by which the presence of the Spirit is manifest.

## 5. TONGUES AND PROPHECY

The gift of ecstatic utterance was a fact of the Apostolic Age and was regarded as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The same kind of spiritual exaltation, too strong for normal and coherent expression, has recurred often in the history of the Church, especially in 'Revivals'. The Pentecostalist argues that this strange gift is essential to the reception of the Spirit, and that the Christian should expect and pray for it. All will agree with the insistence that the Christian must expect to receive the Spirit. They may also question whether 'Tongues' is the only, or the truest, evidence. The Pentecostal challenge is one to be taken seriously and calls for a careful examination of all the evidence i.e., Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 28, 30; 13:1, 14:2 ff.; 13, 18, 22 f., 26ff., 39.

Herein we may note certain points. (1) 'Tongues' is regarded as one effect of the action of the Spirit. (2) It was something other than the speaker's mother-tongue and represented one of the new things given in the Church. (3) There were various kinds of 'Tongues'. (4) The sounds uttered were not intelligible to others and needed to be interpreted. Nor did they convey clear meaning to the speaker but helped him to personal edification by stimulating religious activity. (5) Acts 2 does not necessarily imply that the Apostles spoke in foreign languages; it could mean that the bystanders so interpreted what they heard. (6) 'Tongues' could suggest to the non-Christian that the Church had a mysterious divine power. (7) The ability to interpret 'Tongues' was a distinct gift, not necessarily possessed by the speaker. (8) The gift was open to abuse but its exercise was not forbidden, because it was a gift of the Spirit. (9) 1 Cor. 12:30 shows that this gift was not universal among those who had received the Spirit. 'On the whole,' says Swete, 'it may be gathered that the gift of tongues was a manifestation of the Spirit experienced chiefly on occasions of strong excitement such as those described in the Acts, or by communities such as the Church

at Corinth which had been recently brought out of heathenism and lived in an environment unfavourable to the normal development of the Christian life. The spiritual element in the primitive 'tongues' lay not in the strange utterances themselves but in the elevation of heart and mind by which men were enabled to magnify God, to speak mysteries, to pray in the Spirit, and sing in the Spirit, even at moments when the understanding was unfruitful, and the tongue refused to utter intelligible sounds'.

Inasmuch as the main evidence comes from one of Paul's letters it is useful to note how he guided his converts in the matter. He certainly maintained the common view that a Christian would have received the Spirit and he did not deny that 'Tongues' was one of the gifts of the Spirit. He did not forbid the use of the gift but sought to limit its exercise in public. He pointed out that it was one of the least important gifts and of temporary character. He did not hesitate to say that the disorder to which 'Tongues' easily led was harmful to the Church. So Paul put 'Tongues' in its right place and would not have it treated as if it was of first importance.

When we consider what lies behind dramatic spiritual events such as 'Tongues' we see how wisely Paul dealt with the matter. When the Holy Spirit comes upon a man it is like what happens when glowing stick is plunged into oxygen. There is a great burst of flame. The whole quality of life is intensified. By the Spirit a man gains a greater understanding of the things of God. He is keenly aware of the abundant life Jesus came to give. His will is strengthened to firmer action. His emotions are kindled. When the personality is strong this brings greater power and joy but in the weaker and less stable nature the emotions may break restraint and the man loses self-control, especially when a number of people is so affected together. The total effect is often so spectacular that it is easy to regard it as special evidence of the presence of the Spirit. To point to the fact that the effects tend to be temporary is not to rule out emotion but to stress the need that it should be directed by the mind and harnessed to the will. The preaching which aims solely at the emotions is in danger of grasping the shadow and missing the substance, however dramatic be its immediate results.

When Paul was faced with the situation at Corinth he did not say that these manifestations were wrong and to be forbidden, but that they were unimportant. If God gives them, they must have a purpose; learn what that is but do not lose control. 'Tongues' are startling indeed but there are greater gifts, especially those which help to build up the Church. Beware of the spectacular which serves mainly to focus attention on the individual.

It is on the plain evidence of Scripture that we have to reject any claim that 'Tongues' is a necessary sign of the gift of the Spirit. We do not say that it is wrong. We acknowledge that in its Scripturally ordered form it may have a place in the Church at any time. We cannot agree, however, that it is of the essence of Christian faith and practice. This view is supported by what Scripture does not say. There is no reference to 'Tongues' when Jesus received the gift of the Spirit at baptism. Nor did He include this gift among the things which would mark the coming of the Comforter. The Bible neither says that 'Tongues' will be the unvarying accompaniment of the gift of the Spirit nor promises that it will happen invariably. When 'Tongues' is so stressed as to exclude matters of much greater importance, we must protest that we have not so learned Christ.

Among the more important gifts of the Spirit is Prophecy. Here the Pentecostal emphasis is on much surer ground. 'We cannot announce, 'There will be no sermon this morning because the Lord has given me nothing to say'. If we did we should quite properly be convicted of sloth. We live under the Christian dispensation in which the Spirit is given to quite ordinary men and women, if they study to be faithful, as an abiding possession'. This comment of C. R. North is relevant. From Pentecost onwards, the Church was conscious that Prophecy i.e., inspired utterance—Thus saith the Lord—which had long been absent from Judaism was now restored. The hope had never faded that one day prophecy would return. The importance of John Baptist was the recognition that a Prophet had come and the Messianic Age was at hand. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost confirmed the return of Prophecy and the arrival of the New Age.

The first ministry of the Church was that of the Apostles and with them Prophets were soon associated. They became

so important that Paul could speak of the Church being built on the foundation of Apostles and Prophets. They had the gift of inspired eloquence able to edify, to comfort, and to enthuse. They had insight into the truth of God and could appeal to the conscience of men. The gift was not universal but we find it in most of the Churches founded by Paul e.g., Acts 20:23. At Corinth it was common to hear several inspired utterances at every meeting of the Church. Paul thought it possible that each member might prophesy in turn, 1 Cor. 14:29 ff. But it seems likely that only a few were established as Prophets and recognized as an order in the Church, sharing in the itinerant ministry, Eph. 2:20; 3:5; Rev. 18:20; 22:6. These were distinguished from others who prophesied occasionally, Acts 19:6; 1 Cor. 11:4 f.; 14:31.

At first the Gentile Churches tended to undervalue this gift of the Spirit and to depreciate the inspired utterances, 1 Thess. 5:19 f. This may be due to the seemingly superior attraction of 'Tongues'. Paul corrects this error and puts the Prophetic order next to the Apostolate, 1 Cor. 12:28. He stresses the value of Prophecy as a means of conversion and edification. 1 Cor. 14:3 ff.; 24 ff. In time the Prophets had great influence as the main teaching ministry of the Church. Their gift was used in the selection of other ministries, Acts 13:1 ff.; 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14. As colleagues of the Apostles, they shared with them the task of initiating and consolidating Christian work, Eph. 2:20. We can see the importance of such a body of men, under the immediate guidance of the Spirit, at a time when the first local ministries were drawn from new converts, having but imperfect knowledge of the faith and with little or no training.

Paul came to see that the prophetic gift had limitations. The imperfection of the human instrument might distort the message which the Spirit wished to give. On one occasion he refused to obey what others believed to be a command of the Spirit, Acts 21:4, yet he was always ready to obey the Spirit Himself, Acts 16:6 f. He insisted that the Prophets were responsible for their use of the gift, 1 Cor. 14:32, and stressed the need to subject their utterances to tests applied by men having the gift of discrimination, 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:21. The power to use the gift aright varied with the spiritual attainment of the individual, Rom. 12:6. All

this points to the fact that there was nothing *automatic* about Christian Prophecy. It was a spiritual power which needed a spiritual man to turn it to good account.

The main purpose of this gift was to bear witness to Jesus Christ, Rev. 19:20. In time it was seen that though the gift was especially manifest in the Apostles and Prophets, the Spirit of witness belonged to the Church as a whole, John 15:26 f. A great evidence of the continuance of Pentecostal power is that the preaching of the Gospel, and the consequent expansion of the Church, was carried on through this gift of the Spirit not only to the official Prophets but to many other named and unnamed witnesses, Acts 1:8; 8:29 ff.; 10:19 ff.; 11:12, 19 ff.; 13:12 ff.

Our reference to the gift of the power to heal must be brief. Reference to the concordance shows how prominent this was in the early Church. It confirmed the belief that the New Age had come. Today, in many parts of the Church, this aspect of the work of the Spirit is receiving renewed attention. Bishop Pakenham Walsh, who has done so much to revive the doctrine and practice of spiritual healing in India, affirms that 'the Holy Spirit is surely ready to bestow the gift of healing on many faithful Christians only if they would earnestly desire it'. The implications of this need to be considered, under the guidance of the Spirit, with prayer, study of the Bible and of the increasing body of contemporary evidence.

Cf. E. Frost: *Christian Healing*.

As the Church grew in knowledge and in faith with the help of the inspired itinerant ministers, it became increasingly able to bear its witness through the regular local ministries which began to take shape and through the lives of the members generally. Thus many gifts came to the Church in the form of workers and functions inspired by the Holy Spirit. We read of many gifts being bestowed on the Church, in addition to 'Tongues', Prophecy, and Healing, and all of these were recognized as coming from the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 12:8 ff.; Eph. 4:8 ff. We must not so concentrate on the more dramatic gifts as to forget how many more are promised and still available. Here also Paul has much to tell us of the variety and richness of the gifts of the Spirit, reminding us



especially that the truest evidence that the Spirit has been received lies not in the abnormal and exciting but in the enduring change in ordinary life and fellowship.

## 6. CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Christian life means living by the Spirit. This does not mean that the Christian merely experiences exceptional spiritual gifts occasionally. It refers to a regular and unvarying quality of life. One great service of Paul was to teach the early Christians to look for the working of God not only in the extraordinary but in the ordinary manifestations of spiritual life. On this principle he bases his teaching that all good and useful gifts are from the Spirit of God. He gives to the Church men specially gifted for all the various types of ministry needed for the building up of the fellowship of the Church. The gifts and offices listed in 1 Cor. 12:4 ff.; Eph. 4:11 ff. include quite 'ordinary' gifts alongside the more exceptional. To conclude that the former are natural and the latter supernatural is to think otherwise than Paul for whom anything given by the Spirit is supernatural.

There may be differences of importance but it is well to see by what standard Paul assessed the differences. The gifts which matter most are those which tend to the building up of the Church; the less important are these which glorify the individual. The 'helps' and 'governments' which are among the Spirit's gifts to the Church are probably the ordinary and humble offices of administration and daily care which mean so much for the Church's well being.

We may agree that the return of 'Prophecy' is one of the marks of Pentecost and yet ask whether we do not tend to lay too much stress on the gifts of speech in the worship and councils of the Church. Preaching and discussion of Church affairs have a great part to play but we ought not to forget that there is no gift which cannot be consecrated by the Holy Spirit and used for the service of God. The peon, no less than the minister and the leading layman, has a gift to offer and a service to render.

There is moreover one gift of the Spirit in which all others are summed up and without which no gift, however important it may seem, is worth anything. This is the gift of love.

Never forget the context of Paul's hymn about love. Read 1 Cor. 13 from 12:31. There had been great argument at Corinth as to the most important gift of the Spirit and many were convinced that it was 'Tongues'. So elsewhere they stressed 'Prophecy' or 'Knowledge', as today we find Christians thinking most important those qualities which they possess and which serve their self-esteem. But the writers of the New Testament say with one voice that *love matters most*.

This is the simplest and soundest standard by which to judge whether a man has received the Spirit. Does his religious profession and experience make him more loving? Quite simply, does the fact that he is a Christian make him easier to live with, more patient, more ready to help others, more considerate, less selfish and proud? There is a place for emotion in religion but does it work out in loving action? The test is not what we feel but what we do. 'Christianity', said Von Hugel on his death bed, 'taught us to care. Caring is the greatest thing. Caring matters most'. If a man has so learned Christ it is evidence that he has received the gift of the Spirit, John 13:35; 1 John 4-5.

Many think that when Paul wrote 1 Cor. 13 he had Jesus in his mind's eye and that this is his summary of the life He lived on earth. This can be seen by reading the chapter and inserting 'Jesus' wherever 'love' is written and illustrating each phrase by an incident from the Gospels. Then read again substituting your own name! This may help us to see that there are gifts which tend to make men more self-important and not necessarily more loving, but if we claim to have received the Holy Spirit, love is the standard by which we are judged. Pentecostal power is not so much the ability to work miracles as the endowment to live and act on the high moral plane of the new commandment, John 13:34. It is, as Vidler points out, the work of the Spirit to deliver men from the errors of those who trust in their own wisdom and goodness; to humble and then to build up. He persuades us, as only He can, that the favourite words of Jesus, 'last, least, lost' are the foundations of the life of the Christian who does not press for his rights among his fellows and makes no claim on God in respect of his merits.

It may well be that the principles of the denial of self; of losing one's life to save it; are points of contact in the preach-

ing of the Gospel to Hindus. It is important to remember that the Gospel interprets these in terms of 'Thou shalt love'. Each man's life has to be lived under divers social, political and economic conditions. In Hinduism there is no clear, principle beneath the vast complex of conventions according to which each type or caste is to fulfil its duties. Hence it is not easy for the Hindu to adapt the good life to changing conditions. Many socialists, for example, have felt compelled to deny or ignore religious sanctions. The Christian agrees that the pattern of life has to be adapted to circumstances, but never its spirit. The principle of the art of living is constant whatever the outward circumstances. Augustine summed up this as: *Love and do what you will*. He means that love is large enough to be the all-inclusive motive and principle of the good life. The man who loves God and his neighbour i.e., who recognizes, considers and cares for them, has no need for any codes of behaviour or for rules to fit every conceivable circumstance. He who loves can safely be left to apply the principles but such freedom is possible only in the context of life in the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus.

For the working of this important point see C. A. Anderson Scott: *Introduction to the Ethics of the New Testament*.

Paul further develops the idea in what he says about the *Fruit of the Spirit*. Note that Paul says 'fruit', not 'fruits' as do many in misquoting him. The use of the singular witnesses to an important truth. Over against the works of the flesh which are mutually destructive and cannot exist all together, the fruit of the Spirit is one and indivisible. All must grow where the Spirit is. His work is to harmonize and unify the conflicting impulses of the natural man and to build an integrated personality. He also gives a common mind to the group which without Him is split by conflicting opinions and desires. He enables the individual to become his true self and to find his fulness in the community.

The ecstasy, visions etc., which still loom large in some interpretations of Pentecost were a common feature in the religious life of Paul's day. Not here, or in 'Tongues', did Paul see the real fruit of the Spirit but in the qualities he enumerates in Gal. 5:22 f. The true evidence that the Spirit has been received is not in emotional externals but in a

deepened moral life. The man who has the gift of the Spirit is a converted man. The characteristic result of the working of the Spirit in a person is the change of his character into the character manifested in Christ. Paul's summary of the fruit of the Spirit is simply a list of the moral qualities displayed in the life of Jesus. This is typical of the New Testament way of holding together the moral and the spiritual. The two are not the same but they cannot exist apart. The spiritual is the work of God in human life but it must be manifested in terms of moral action. Moral action leads to character. As the Christian grows in the things of the Spirit, his actions and character become more and more like those of Jesus.

Mackenzie refers to a discussion in which a Christian businessman stressed the need to apply religious principles to every department of life, including business. A wealthy Hindu merchant rejoined: 'He has spoken from the materialist point of view. I wish to speak from the spiritual point of view'. The implication is that religion and business must not be mixed. It is typical of the Hindu view that daily life is no path to spiritual reality, but only a trackless waste which the seeker must abandon if he would reach the soul's true good. There are some Christians who tend to regard religion as one department of life and adopt a piety which develops the 'spiritual' in opposition to the secular and fails to see that the truly spiritual is expressed in all the relations of life. I think of the student who gave such long hours to meditation as to be unable to do justice to his studies and had the reputation of being more 'spiritual' than his fellows; and of the missionary who would not lend a hand to famine relief because 'I have a spiritual work to do'. This is contrary to the New Testament teaching that it is the work of the Spirit to spiritualize the whole life of man. Those who show the fruit of the Spirit in daily living know no distinction between sacred and secular for all that they do and are is touched by God.

Jesus taught His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say when they were brought before the courts, Mark 13:11. This was soon found true in experience, Acts 4:8; 6:10; 7:55; 13:9. In general, the first Christians expected that the Spirit would give clear guidance as to what they

should do, Acts 8:26 ff.; 13:1 ff.; 16:6 f. Whenever the Church had to settle problems of faith and practice, it trusted to the guidance of the Spirit rather than to code or custom. This explains the lack of barren controversy and the wealth of wise and fruitful dealing with issues as the Church carried on its mission—*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*. They believed, and acted on the belief, that what Jesus had left unexplained would be met by the promised Spirit of truth, John 14:26; 16:13. On this work of the Spirit the Gospels are themselves testimony. The minds of the Evangelists were quickened to remember *and interpret* what Jesus said and did.

So down the years the Spirit has continued to recall Jesus' deeds, to interpret His words, to show new facets of the divine truth once and for all revealed, and to guide the Church to apply it to the needs of a changing world. It is said that it is absurd to look to the New Testament for guidance in the solution of modern problems for it speaks to and out of a very different situation. This implies the false view that the New Testament is simply a text-book written once and for all, and handed on. The revelation in Jesus does not end with the words recorded. That which once confronted men in Him continues to enlighten men as, under the guidance of the Spirit, they bring the Gospels to bear on new problems of thought and conduct. 'The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy word'. This happens through the work of the Spirit who is Guide, Interpreter and Remembrancer. He is given not to take the place of a departed Christ but to make Him our contemporary.

We have already considered the belief that God rules the world. Men may rebel but His will is the great creative power leading it to the fulfilment of His purposes. It is a proper inference that there is for each and for all, at all times, a course of action in harmony with the will of God; that despite the blindness consequent on sin man may know what this is. It is the work of the Spirit to disclose this — under certain conditions. Romans 8 teaches that the Spirit guides those who have come into fellowship with God through Him and who are willing to continue therein by obedience to His Word. Paul's contrast between walking after the flesh and after the Spirit sets out the two great alternative in life. There

is the 'natural' way in which a man sees himself to be the centre of His world—the result of the Fall and the cause of our troubles. Man's true end is to glorify, not himself, but God. This is the 'supernatural' way offered in Christ through the Spirit. Herein He guides through the reading of the Word of God, through prayer, and through all the appointed means of grace.

It is necessary to stress the point that we must not expect the Spirit to guide us only into the unusual or spectacular. Many shrink from seeking divine guidance in small affairs—or in what may seem small to us. Yet Jesus taught that God's care is particular and minute, Matt. 10:29 f. It is wise to refer everything to the Spirit's guidance. For most of us and for most of the time, He leads along the path of simple daily duty. The Christian is not led constantly to do extraordinary things, but to do the ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

## 7. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The Old Testament uses the figure of *dew* as a sign of the grace of God e.g., Hos. 14:5. This is a fitting symbol for the Holy Spirit. The renewing work of dew is mysterious and constant; it falls on each blade of grass and covers the whole field. The same idea of a gift for each and for all is expressed in the fire at Pentecost when one great flame manifested the presence of the Spirit with the whole company in the upper room and from it tongues separated to rest upon each disciple. Such is the work of the Spirit always. He creates the fellowship of the Church and empowers the individual. He convicts each man of sin and convinces him of salvation in Christ. But the experience of the presence and power of the Spirit is never received by a man, by and for himself; it is a corporate and shared experience. The Spirit takes a man out of isolation and brings him into the fellowship of the Church. He continues His work within the fellowship which He creates and sustains, providing the growth necessary to life in Christ and building up each man as a member of the Body.

There are some who think it better, in this context, to speak of the individual first and the Church second. Snaith,

for example, argues that the Gospel is preached by the Church and only by the Church, and to this extent the Holy Spirit functions through the Church. But the work of grace which brings the individual into the fellowship is a direct work of the Spirit in his heart and life. There is no intermediary. God Himself directly and personally convicts him of sin and convinces him of the truth of Christ. This is the primary work of the Spirit. Others, while acknowledging the importance of the work of the Spirit in the individual hold it to be even more important in the Christian society. They argue that the Saved and Saving Fellowship which the Spirit creates and into which the individual is incorporated at baptism is the prior fact. This argument which leads to many diverse conclusions and offers many problems to those who work for Christian re-union, seems to me to be irrelevant. The Spirit works in both and in both together. It is more important to see His work as a whole than to argue as to which aspect is prior. When Paul speaks of the Fellowship of the Spirit he means both the communion of the individual with God and the communion which the Holy Spirit creates between believers. He makes this fact the ground of his appeal to the Christians at Philippi...if the Holy Spirit really has created fellowship in you and among you...This is a lesson which has continually to be learned.

Concerning the work of the Spirit in creating the Fellowship which is the Church, more has been written in Vol. II Chapter 3 of this book. Here it must suffice to point out that, in the Creed, belief concerning the Church depends on belief in the Holy Spirit. He is bestowed on the Church and is the source of its life. His presence constitutes the Church as a corporate whole: a Body having a single life. It is as being the Fellowship created by the Spirit that the Church is different from Old Israel; from all other kinds of community; from any merely human society. This is, and has always been the secret of the Church's inner solidarity; of its power against the world; of its success in the furtherance of the Gospel.

The continued presence of the Spirit in the Church preserves its true nature as the Body of Christ. He works through the organization of the Church, through the Word and Sacraments and all means of grace; and inspires the worship



and witness. He also preserves the Church as a spiritual fellowship safeguarding it against the dangers of tradition, ritualism, legalism and mere reliance on authority. Without Him the Church cannot be the Church.

The fact that it is the work of the Spirit to create Fellowship means that Christian life is always in community. The individual experience of the Spirit cannot be separated from the corporate life of the Church. He works in men not just to bring isolated saints into being but to build believers into the Body. The growth in grace and knowledge of those who have received the Holy Spirit is bound up with their participation in the life and mission of the Church. Cf. Acts *passim* 1 Cor. 12:12 ff.; Eph. 2:19 ff.; 4:1 ff.; Phill 2:1 ff.; N.B. that the virtues listed in Gal. 5:21f. are all such as draw men out of isolation and set them in true relations to God and their fellows.

We referred above to the contrast between the type of religion represented by Apollos and that by Paul. There is all the difference between the attempts of men to do good and the deliverance and power which follow the response to the Spirit of God. The first lesson of Pentecost was that the secret of power is not in men. We cannot set ourselves deliberately even to repent and believe, but only by the impact on us of the divine power which enables us to repent, believe, receive forgiveness and henceforth act freely from contact with the source of life. The good life is not a matter of keeping rules but of yielding oneself to the power of the Spirit. Discipleship is not following Christ by imitating His deeds but by following the guidance of His Spirit. We do right to sing, concerning the Spirit:

And every virtue we possess,  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness,  
Are His alone.

It is the abiding ministry of the Holy Spirit in the individual to bestow the new life which is born in a man when, through His inspiration, he turns to God in penitence, believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Here the great word is Conversion.

*Note:* Fuller study of the great issues here raised waits upon the consideration of the *Doctrine of the Atonement* in Vol. II Chapter 2. It will help at this stage to ponder over some of the great passages of Scripture concerning Salvation, e.g., Matt. 20:17ff.; Mark 1:15; 2:5ff.; 4:40; 5:34; 9:23ff.; 10:52; John 3:1 ff.; 16 ff.; Acts 9:1 ff.; Rom. 1: 18-3:20; 3:21-8:39; 1 Cor. 1:26-2:5; 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:11-6:10; Gal. 2: 15-3:14; 5: 16 ff.; Eph. 1: 3 ff.; 2:1 ff.; Phil. 3:4 ff.; Tit. 3:5 ff.; 1 Pet. 1:13 ff.; 1 John 1:5-2:17, 3:1 ff.

Cf. also C. Ryder Smith: *The Bible Doctrine of Salvation*.

B. Citron: *The New Birth*.

In the fullest sense of the word, *conversion* concerns the whole life of the Christian from the darkness before the new birth to eternal life. Herein the initiative is always with God. Acceptance with God is never by any goodness or effort of our own. I can find no example in the Bible of a man who finds God by seeking Him. From beginning to end, conversion is a faith experience made possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The awakening of the sense of need and the desire of the sinner to be reconciled to God are the work of the Spirit. He alone gives the new birth needed if the sinner is to be saved. The experience of receiving the gift of the Spirit is the secret of that transforming and communicable power which is the mark of the Christian, John 3:6 ff.; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 5:1, 18.

The Holy Spirit is not some vague influence for good but the invasive power of God who possesses the sinner and changes him so that he can be always conqueror. The Gospel does not advise men to be good, it offers a power not themselves, to make that possible. This enabling gift of God through the Spirit is sheer miracle. Therefore we call the Spirit Lord and Life Giver. It is His divine and proper work to give *Life*. Here we must note that the Bible distinguishes between two kinds of life. There is *bios*, the ordinary physical life which men share with other creatures, which begins in the womb and ends in the tomb. There is also *zōē* which begins when a man is born again and comes to be in Christ, and which has no end. This is the Eternal Life which the Spirit gives. All men have *bios* by nature. All men can have *zōē*—by the gift of the Holy Spirit who consummates the

work of Christ by turning them to God in repentance and faith.

This new, given, life through and in the Holy Spirit is a life of freedom. The New Testament contrasts the life of bondage in the flesh with the life of freedom, when the Spirit wins over the flesh the victory which the Law demanded, but could not achieve. Without the Spirit man is the slave of sin and unable to obey the Law. In the Spirit he is set free from sin and enabled to fulfil the purpose for which the Law was given on the higher plane of the freedom of the children of God, Rom. 7-8.

The word *Sanctification* is commonly used to describe the process which follows conversion regarded as the beginning of the new life in Christ. However, in the New Testament, the word refers to the act of God which separates men for His own and makes them holy men by the Holy Spirit. The power of the Spirit to make men holy is stressed throughout the New Testament, which speaks of 'saints' where we should say 'Christians', and sees the evidence of the power of the Gospel not only in the witness of preaching but also of the manner of life lived by 'the saints'. Was not an early name for the Christian religion 'The Way?' Again we note that the reference was not to abnormal expressions but to ordinary good living.

Nevertheless the use of *sanctification* to describe growth in holiness has value in reminding us that conversion is not simply the beginning of the Way. It is not an event which happens once and then comes to an end; it is rather the new beginning of a continuing work of God in man. When the Holy Spirit begins His work in a man there is a *crisis*, be it short or long, which marks the *before Christ* from the *in Christ* in the life history of the individual. There is a great change in the direction of life, but the journey goes on. It is the work of the Spirit to enable the new man in Christ to grow, and He does this within the Fellowship of the Church. We dare set no limits to the fruit of the Spirit. It is the goal of the Spirit to redeem the whole human nature in terms of Christ. No man can claim to be wholly converted until the Holy Spirit has so done His work that he loves God and his neighbour perfectly. There is point in Bishop Andrews' saying: 'Christ's coming once can do us no good unless the

Holy Spirit come continually'. Cf. Matt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:12 ff.; also the Collect for Purity.

When Christians pray, as they should at all times and not only at Whitsuntide, that the gift of the Holy Spirit may be poured on them, they are asking for *Him* and not just His gifts; that He will abide with them and give such gifts as are needed. They pray in good hope of receiving an answer but they may not expect to receive in full here; only that they 'may daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more till they come into Thine everlasting Kingdom.' In the experience of the power and other blessings of the Holy Spirit we enter into the new age which has been brought in by Christ; we have the foretaste of the End, living 'in these last days', Heb. 1:2. Yet the present experience of the Spirit is not the fulness of our inheritance in Christ. The victory known now is not all. The individual, the Church, and the whole creation have yet more to look forward to, Rom. 8:23 cf. 1 John 3:2. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of promise; the pledge and first fruit of the redemption wrought by Christ, 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:13f. Paul's word 'earnest' means token; part payment in promise of full payment later. In modern Greek it is used for betrothal. At each stage of the life in Christ the Spirit is both the beginning of a continually increasing gift, given as we can receive and that we may grow; and the token from God of His promise that through the Spirit He will continually lead us on in increasing knowledge of the richness of the gift until the full and perfect knowledge in Heaven.

Let there be no doubt that what we have here is knowledge. It is the promise of God that men may know that they are saved. Much confusion concerning the doctrine of *Assurance* is cleared up if the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation is separated from the context of mere emotion. It is not a matter of fine feelings but of the certainty that now we are *alive*. Assurance is no mere subjective experience, it is grounded in the work of Christ; achieved by the Holy Spirit; received by faith. The witness of Scripture and Creed is corroborated in the experience of the believer by the Holy Spirit. By the sure Word of God, by the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives we know that we are forgiven, born again, and

are the children of God, Rom. 8:16. The final term in the doctrine of assurance is the evidence of love working outwards, Matt. 7:16 ff.; 1 John 3:14. John Wesley, for whom the doctrine was the theological expression of the experience of 'the heart strangely warmed', defined it as 'an inward impression in the soul by which the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ hath loved me and that all my sins are blotted out and that I, even I, am reconciled to God'. He then went on to the spiritual conclusion of the matter in the doctrine of Perfect Love. This is in harmony with all that Paul says concerning the change which Pentecost has made in the possibilities of the individual human life, by the working of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of men as members of the Body. Commenting on 1 Cor. 2:11 Moffatt writes: 'A new faculty of vision into the deep, high thoughts of God is bestowed upon those who accept his revelation on his own terms, for the Spirit which is conscious of the innermost divine life imparts this knowledge to the receptive'.

This reminds us that the sphere in which the ethical work of the Spirit is done is the *human spirit*, Rom. 8:16; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; 2 Tim. 4:22; Philem. 25; cf. Rom. 8:27; 9:1; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:16; 4:23. The Holy Spirit does not create the spirit of man. It is potentially present, even though undeveloped, in all, for man is created in the Image of God. Every man has affinity with the spiritual and eternal. Cf. Vol. II Chapter 1§3. The spirit in man answers the Spirit of God who finds in man that on which He can work. However, the human spirit is so depraved that renewal is needed.

The New Testament names Baptism as the moment and act of the change as described in Eph. 4:71 ff. A fuller account of Baptism is given in Vol. II Chapter 5 that it is necessary to consider here its relation to the Holy Spirit, especially in regard to Baptism as the act wherein the Holy Spirit incorporates the individual believer into His fellowship.

Fison stresses the fact that membership of the Church is through Baptism and not through 'experience'. He meets modern doctrines of Baptism which banish the Holy Spirit with the reminder that Baptism is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit. It stands at the entrance of the Christian life to guard

'the sole prerogative of God the Holy Ghost to introduce any soul to that intimate communion with God and with his fellow-men which is the hall-mark of the fellowship of the holy Catholic Church'. There are no substitutes for Baptism by water and the Spirit. It is as much a mystery for the adult as for the child. The water as the outward sign of the inward grace, links Baptism and the new birth. The Spirit, who is the effective power brings in the new element of meaning from Jesus' own Baptism, Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22, when He was empowered for His ministry. The new birth is from above. It is the descent of the Spirit which justifies the formula of Matt. 28:19. Cf. Fison: *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit*, 19 ff.; 203 ff.

From the beginning Baptism was practised by the Church. The disciples took over John Baptist's rite and gave to it a new meaning. John had contrasted his water Baptism with a Spirit Baptism to be bestowed by the One greater than he; his Baptism was but an earnest of that which would follow the out-pouring of power in the New Age. Acts describes the Christian rite as the fulfilment of John's, similar but efficacious, 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24 f. The main fact is clear, even though, as we shall see in Vol. II. Chapter 5, some of the details are difficult. The Messiah had come. Henceforth, Baptism, by water and the Spirit, is in His name. The gift of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism is the focus of the experience; the essential and distinctively Christian thing. The point of the story related in Acts 18:24-19:7 is that Apollos and his friends were disciples of John Baptist and not yet Christians because in their Baptism there had been no work of, or endowment with, the Holy Spirit.

From the beginning, also, the Spirit was linked with Baptism and there was no membership of the Church without Baptism by and with the Spirit. This was the essential experience of initiation into the continuing new life, John 3:5; Gal. 4:29; Tit. 3:5. The Church hesitated at first before saying that the gift of the Spirit was bestowed through the rite of Baptism (cf. C. A. Anderson Scott: *The Spirit in the New Testament*, 151 ff.) but it is certain that for Paul, Baptism marked the moment when the Spirit was given and received. He thinks of the mission of the Spirit taking effect when He enters man's life at Baptism. In Rom. 6:3 ff. he describes what

happens in Baptism and in 1 Cor. 12:13 how it happens. He stresses the cleansing from sin and renewal of life; the invocation of the Name which gives authority to the rite; the uniting of the individual to the People of God. In all this the Spirit of God is both given and active, Tit. 3:5 ff. He also stresses that faith in the believer is needed. The act of Baptism sets the seal on an inner process; the seal alone is ineffective. Thus, as in 1 Cor. 1:14 f., he states that it is his work to arouse faith through the preaching of the Word and of others to administer the rite:

The sacramental washing is both sign and means of the second birth and new life wrought by the Holy Spirit. To say that Baptism is with water and the Spirit means more than that the outward act is symbolic of the inner change. There is something parallel to the symbolism of the Prophets who did something which corresponded with their spoken Word and helped to bring it about. In Christian Baptism there is a double immersion. The water is the counterpart of another element in which the convert is baptized and which makes him a new man. The vital factor in creating the state of regeneration is the work of the Spirit in Baptism. Our forms of Baptismal service, with their stress on the promise of the gift of the Spirit, rightly acknowledge that Baptism is a great opportunity for the Holy Spirit. Salvation is not by water but by the working of the Spirit who, in a way unknown in the Old Covenant, moves upon the face of the water in the new creation.

The moral revolution e.g., 1 Cor. 6:11, 17, worked by the Spirit sent by Christ from the Father, is a change from carnal to heavenly life analogous to that of Christ at the Resurrection. What happens at Baptism does not stop there. The new birth by the Spirit gives the promise of a new continuing life 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16. The Christian may seem to be the same as before: his body is unchanged, he is still subject to weakness and accidents, temptations and falls are always possible, Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19; Heb. 10:29, but he can never again be one to whom the Spirit has not come, Heb. 6:4 ff. At Baptism the life of the Spirit has begun. It is not the mere temporary rite of a few minutes but the permanent principle of the whole life-time. Even now the life in the flesh is different, Gal. 2:20, and this will be made apparent



after death when the believer will visibly display the heavenly nature now potential but hidden.

What has been said here concerning Baptism will be stressed again in Vol. II. All our thinking about the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments must begin with the Holy Spirit. All these great facts, and any doctrine of them, are subordinate to the reality of the gift of the Spirit. With Him they are most intimately associated and on Him they depend.

One word needs to be added. Fison refers to the fact that in some circles the second great sacrament of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ tends to exclude the first great sacrament of the presence of the Lord the Spirit from the effective scheme of salvation. It is true that Baptism is the means of entry into the fellowship of the Spirit and Holy Communion is the means of renewing fellowship with Christ. This is a reasonable and valid distinction. There is no justification, however, for distinguishing between the working of the indwelling of Christ and that of the Spirit. Moreover, the great value of the *Epiclesis*—the invoking of the Spirit on the elements and the people—found in some Liturgies of Holy Communion, is the open acknowledgment of the work of the Spirit in this sacramental act also. Cf. J. E. L. Oulton: *Holy Communion and Holy Spirit*, especially 141 ff.

### 8. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

For the answering of this question the evidence of Scripture can be summed up thus:

(i) It was expected that the Messianic Age would be marked by a great outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord.

(ii) The life of Jesus the Messiah is represented as being lived under the full guidance and inspiration of the Spirit and it was said that He would baptize with Holy Spirit.

(iii) In the early Church promises were fulfilled. After Jesus ascended the Spirit was received in a measure unknown before and there was a great outpouring of His gifts.

(iv) The Spirit was the power by which New Israel was constituted as the Body of Christ and the source of spiritual and ethical holiness and the knowledge of divine things in believers.

(v) The Spirit was of God and was also called the Spirit of Christ.

(vi) Language was used of the Spirit implying personality. The Spirit is a third divine He.

(vii) The mind of the Apostolic Age was gathered up in the Baptismal Formula and the Benediction which co-ordinated the Spirit with the Father and the Son.

Cf. E. F. Scott: *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*.

H. B. Swete: *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*.

At this point we should consider in some detail the teaching of Paul and of John.

Paul speaks of the divine Spirit in three ways: the Spirit of God 10 times; the Spirit of Christ, of Jesus Christ, of the Lord once each, Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 3:17; cf. Gal. 4:6; the Spirit 110 and the Holy Spirit 15. As in the New Testament generally 'Holy' for Paul includes the aweful and the ethical e.g., 1 Cor. 3:16 f., 6:17 ff.; cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 6:1. The primary passages for studying Paul's teaching are Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 2:6 ff.; 12:1 ff.; Gal. 5:16 ff.; Eph. 2:13 ff.; 4:1 ff.

The Spirit is the dominant category of Paul's theology. He derived his knowledge from the Old Testament doctrine, especially as in Isaiah e.g., 63:9 ff. and from his own experience and that of his fellow Christians. Current Hellenistic ideas about spirit may have had some slight influence especially and mediated through Wisdom 7:22-8:1 but there is no trace of Stoic Pantheism in his thought.

There are three main ideas in his use of Spirit:

(i) The Spirit is divine power breaking into a man's life delivering him from sin, uniting him with God in Christ and lifting him to his highest level.

(ii) He is a divine being who acts as a person.

(iii) The Christian and the Church live in the Spirit.

From this develop the following points:

(i) The gift of the Spirit, consequent on the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, is what separates the Christian from the rest of mankind.

(ii) The work of the Spirit covers the whole of the Christian life. The understanding of *new creation, adoption, sanctification*, and even *faith, justification reconciliation*, requires the doctrine of the Spirit. Paul uses 'Grace' of Christ and not of the Spirit but his doctrines of Grace and of the Spirit are fundamentally the same.

(iii) Paul contrasts the Spirit with the flesh, and with the Law. The Spirit wins that victory over the flesh which the Law demanded but could not produce. By *flesh* Paul means the whole man without the Spirit. With the Spirit the whole man is Spirit.

(iv) The Spirit is the source and bond of the life of the Church in which His various gifts are bestowed. The Spirit was normally received at Baptism. In 1 Cor. 12:13 He may also be connected with the Lord's Supper.

(v) In contrast with Old Testament teaching, the Spirit is given to every believer and not only to extraordinary men; His work covers the whole of Christian life and not only the abnormal in it; the ethical and the spiritual always go together—goodness is the most characteristic result of the gift of the Spirit; and the gift is continuous not occasional.

There are some things which Paul does not say:

(i) He nowhere ascribes the authority of the Old Testament to the Spirit.

(ii) He does not relate his doctrine of conscience to the Spirit.

(iii) He has no doctrine of the immanence of the Spirit in nature but relates it to God through the Word. In Rom. 8:21 ff. he does relate nature to the Spirit through man, but here he is thinking not of what it is but of what it is to be.

These limitations, characteristic of the New Testament as a whole, are linked with the belief, which seemed so obvious in the environment of the early Church, that the Christian was different from other men just because he had received the Spirit. Today we say that only in Christ is the Spirit fully received and known for what He is.

All this teaching bears on the problem of the relation of the Spirit to the Godhead which we shall consider in the next chapter. For the moment we should note that Paul both identifies the Spirit with the risen Christ and distinguishes them. The same is true as regards the Spirit and the Father.

R. Birth Hoyle: *The Holy Spirit in St. Paul*.

O. C. Quick: *The Doctrines of the Creed*, 278 ff.

*John* uses the word of the divine Spirit; of the human spirit of Jesus, 11:33; 13:21; and in a sense peculiar to him as almost the equivalent of 'spiritual', 4:24. The phrase 'Spirit

of God' is found in 1 John 4:2, 13 but 'Spirit of Christ' never. 'Spirit' with or without the definite article is used by itself as a phrase now of well-known meaning. The adjective 'Holy' is attached three times. A favourite phrase of John is 'Spirit of truth', but in the active and ethical sense as well as the intellectual. Other evidence from John is included in the earlier section on *The Holy Spirit and Jesus*. N.B. the summary there of the references.

John agrees with Acts and Paul that the Spirit is the differentia of the Christian; that He was given after the Resurrection and that the gift is associated with Baptism. As in Paul, the Spirit is the abiding possession of Christians; He is both identified with and distinguished from the risen Christ; He has the qualities of a person; He is not named in reference to the Old Testament; and is contrasted with the flesh (as also with 'the world'.)

On the other hand, John never mentions tongues, prophecy or other special gifts of the Spirit; and even when he agrees with other teaching, he sometimes makes his own emphasis. He stresses that it is the work of the Spirit to recall Christ's teaching to the disciples; to reveal God's further will; to convict the world; and to witness to Christ. Where Paul speaks of adoption, John prefers new birth.

In some respects John carries earlier teaching a stage further. There are the beginnings of exposition of the meaning of the Spirit as the abiding possession of Christians in 1:33; 3:34; 7:39 and of His relation to Christ in 16:7 ff. He carries the doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit a stage further than Paul in 14:16 ff.; and relates the Spirit to the Father and the Son more clearly. He proceeds from the Father; is sent by the Son. The use of the masculine word Paraclete emphasises the personality of the Spirit.

O. C. Quick: *The Doctrines of the Creed*, 287 ff.

From the total revelation in Scripture by what He does in us and for us we learn who the Spirit is. We confess that He who, in old Israel, spoke by the Prophets proceeds from the Father and the Son and with them is worshipped and glorified; that His proper work is to give Life; and that He is Lord in the same sense that the Father and Jesus Christ are Lord. This means that God the Holy Spirit is a divine

person, co-eternal and co-essential with the Father and the Son. For the fuller understanding of this we must consider (i) the distinction (ii) the divinity and (iii) the personality of the Holy Spirit as these truths are taught in Scripture.

(i) One of the commonest errors among Christians is to confuse the Holy Spirit with the Father, or more often, with the Risen Christ, and to imply that there are only two persons in the Godhead. There is some excuse for this error. In the New Testament the Spirit is named as of the Father and of Christ and in some passages He seems to be identified with one or the other. We must learn to read the ambiguous passages in the light of the teaching as a whole. The *distinction* between the Spirit and the Father and the Son may not always be clear, but it is real. The New Testament does not say *how* the Spirit is distinguished from the other persons—that is one of the problems later solved in the doctrine of the Trinity—but it does in fact make the distinction e.g., 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18.

It is not easy to see how Paul thought of the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son and some passages suggest a confusion between the Spirit and the Risen Christ. He uses the terms almost interchangeably. This, however, is evidence of the closeness of the relation between the three. There is no truth in the idea that Paul identifies the Spirit with either the Father or Christ. He can interchange the names in the sense that Christ gives His gifts through the Spirit but never in the sense that the Spirit was incarnate, died, and rose again. Thus in 1 Cor. 12:4 ff.; Eph. 4:4 ff. there is close connection but definite distinction of the persons. Cf. Rom. 8:16 f.; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:3.

The same close relation and clear distinction is found in John. Christ promises that He will send the other Comforter, and that He Himself will come again. The Father also sends the Spirit, John 14:26; 15:26.

In the experience of the early Church the distinction of the Spirit from Christ seems clear. It was the gift of the Spirit which stirred the Apostles to preach Christ. When men hearing their message confessed faith in Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit came upon them, Acts 1:8; 8:29; 10:19, 44 ff.; 11:12.

L. S. Thornton concludes an analysis of the New Testament evidence for the clear distinction between Christ and the

Spirit, saying: 'Both Christ and the Spirit dwell in the Christian soul but not in the same way. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life. He is being formed in us... St. Paul nowhere says that the Spirit is formed in us, or that we are to be conformed to the image of the Spirit... The indwelling of the Spirit involves the indwelling of Christ, consequently the indwelling of Christ is inseparable from the quickening. But the Spirit is never regarded as the content of the quickened life. He is the agent of revelation who brings the content of truth to the spirit of man; and by consequence we have the mind of Christ.... The Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of the quickening... Christ is the objective ground of salvation; the Spirit is the effective cause of the new life in us.' Cf. *The Incarnate Lord*, Chap. 12.

(ii) The very facts, as in (i), which constitute the problem in regard to the separate being of the Spirit are the evidence for His *divinity*. The New Testament regards the Spirit as divine—or how could He be, in a sense, interchangeable with the Father and the Son? As to His divine nature there is no doubt at all. All His activities are of One who is Lord in the same sense as Jesus is Lord. Only such a one has the power to give Life. Cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16 f.; 6:19 f.; 2 Cor. 3:17 f. As to how this belief is in harmony with the oneness of God is yet another problem which the doctrine of the Trinity answers.

(iii) We noticed that in the Old Testament the Spirit of the Lord was personal in the sense that it was the power of the personal Yahweh. Never was Spirit regarded as some vague impersonal *mana*. Towards the end of the period there were signs of the tendency to ascribe distinct personality to the Spirit. But the fulness came only after Christ had come. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is *a person in his own right*, distinct from and parallel to the Father and the Son—He and not it.

The doctrine of the personality of the Spirit is not easy but our thinking must be controlled by the Scriptures where, beyond any doubt, the Spirit is a third HE, one against whom a man can blaspheme, the Comforter who can come to men. However difficult it may be to think of the Spirit as a person, the refusal to do so is to deny the clear evidence of God's Word.

It is best to begin with the teaching of John 14:16 f., 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13 f. Jesus' promise of the Comforter who should continue His work and whose work is parallel to that of Christ; and the identification of the Comforter, when He had come, with the Spirit of the Lord, are the basis of the doctrine. Henceforth the neuter word in Greek for Spirit is treated as if it were masculine. We then read again Romans 8 which is clearly talking about a person. Note that in 1 Cor. 12 the problem is not the conflict between ideas of a personal Spirit and an impersonal 'Atman', but the contrast between the many spiritual beings of the heathen world and the one divine Spirit in whom the Christians believed. That He is a person is clear from what we read of His activity. The work of Him who dwells in men, guiding and inspiring them, is not the effect of an influence but the impact of person upon person. The Fellowship of this divine person is regarded as parallel to the Grace of Christ and the Love of the Father, Acts 5:3 f.; 13:12; 15:28; 16:7; 1 Cor. 2:10; 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 13:14.

## 9. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HISTORY

The development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Church follows the same general course as that of other doctrines. The Scriptural belief in His divine person and work is always implied in the attempts to produce formulas of definition. During the process there were some theologians who through over-emphasis of one aspect and neglect of others made mistakes and reached conclusions contrary to Scripture and the common sense of the faithful. Again and again we can trace the influence of the Spirit Himself leading the Church back to the truth, or forward to new understanding. We note the constant tendency to argue from the evidence of the divine work of the Spirit to His divine being. In general, the Church has sought to systematize in doctrine the implications of the New Testament revelation which we have outlined above and to find answers to the hard questions raised. Consequently the history of thought concerning the Spirit tends to be bound up with the doctrine of the Trinity; and to a lesser extent, with the long discussions on the person of Christ, so that when the Nicene formula was accepted, the



doctrine of the divinity of the Spirit followed without further argument. There is a good introductory account of the history by H. Watkin-Jones in the *Headingley Lectures*, 71 ff.

At first the doctrine of the Spirit was treated in detail only by a few individuals but later, especially in the fourth century, there was a general attempt by the Church to make explicit in formula what was implicit in faith. *The Apostolic Fathers*, for the most part, simply carry on the teaching of the New Testament but we see in *Hermas* a tendency to identify the Holy Spirit with Christ. The preoccupation of the Apologists with the Word leads them to refer everything to Christ and even to rank the Spirit lower than the Son. *Athenagoras* put forward an idea which has been developed by many in later times that the Spirit is the bond of union between the Father and the Son. Apart from such details, however, this period is marked by a transfer of emphasis from experience to authority. In the New Testament the experience of the gift of the Spirit, spontaneous and overwhelming, was at the heart of the life of the Church. In the second century there is a marked decline in the intensity of the experience. It is still claimed that the gift of the Spirit is the peculiar privilege of the Church and the moral superiority of Christians is cited in evidence, but clearly the indwelling of the Spirit is no longer known as a mighty force; rather as a deposit committed to the care of the Church. There are even suggestions that the gift of the Spirit is something that *was* in the great apostolic days but now is exceptional and limited to the few, not to be looked for among the members of the Church as a whole. It is on this background that we should understand the crude but vital reaction of the *Montanists*. They have been called the Methodists of the early Church; they have more in common with the Pentecostalists of our own day. Their extravagances and errors, unhappily, prevented them making any permanent contribution but their stress on the reign of the Spirit *now* did something to stimulate thought as to the meaning of His person.

We find the beginnings of systematic doctrine in *Origen*, but some of his language had unfortunate results when developed by others. There is more solid teaching in the writings of his pupil *Gregory Thaumaturgus*. However, account of the general orthodox teaching, about the middle

of the fourth century, is found in the lectures to catechumens of *Cyril of Jerusalem*. He stresses the Biblical evidence and refers to a number of errors in its exposition. He makes much of the works of the Spirit and emphasises that the Spirit before Christ, during the Incarnation, and since Pentecost is one and the same. In spite of Cyril's deprecation of the attempt to define the mystery of the relations within the Trinity, it is clear that men were asking hard questions which needed answering. There is on the one hand the correspondence of *Athanasius* with Bishop Serapion in which the lines of the orthodox answer begin to merge. On the other hand *Macedonius* drew the implications of Arianism as to the Holy Spirit, teaching that He is not true God but a creature. His argument has all the deceptive simplicity of that of Arius regarding Christ. It runs: the Spirit is either begotten or not. If not there is more than one Being without origin. If begotten, it must be either by the Father, or the Son. If of the Father, there are two Sons; if of the Son, God has a grandson. It was not enough to deride or deny *Macedonius'* teaching. The implications of the Creed of Nicaea needed drawing more clearly in regard to the Spirit. This was done by *Basil* whose treatise *On the Holy Spirit* is one of the great books, for all time, on the theme. Finally, the *Council of Constantinople*, 381, left no room for doubts as to the Catholic doctrine of the Spirit as a divine person, co-eternal and co-essential with the Father and the Son, the third person of the triune Godhead. The Council reaffirmed the Creed of Nicaea, adding an unambiguous statement concerning the Spirit and condemning all opinions to the contrary. Henceforward, so far as the creedal exposition of Scripture was concerned, the mind of the Church as to the Holy Spirit was assured. Further positive developments were as to the meaning of faith in the triune personality of God.

So far the main teaching had been in the East. In the West *Hilary of Poitiers* taught much on the lines of *Athanasius*, and, perhaps, more systematically. He spoke of the Spirit as from the Father through the Son. Later *Augustine*, in the course of his teaching on the Trinity, said that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. This western formula had unfortunate results. The doctrine of the *Procession* of the Spirit, as it is called, has little bearing on

the realities of the religious life. It is a technical term, derived from John 15:26, to express the relation of the Spirit to the Godhead. The Son is begotten; the Spirit proceeds, and both eternally. The East and the West tended to look at the matter from different angles and to use slightly different language. The East thought that the phrase 'from the Father and the Son' weakened the truth that all is derived from the Father and preferred to say 'from the Father through the Son'. The difference was not vital; a matter of emphasis that could easily have been cleared up. However, the Western theologians quietly took upon themselves to add 'and from the son' to the Latin form of the Catholic creed, and this became a main cause of the schism between East and West. The action of the West was hardly deliberate, almost accidental; the effect on doctrine was negligible, but it became a focal point of tension between the two great areas of the Church and led to the final breach in the eleventh century. Every since, the '*filioque clause*', irregularly inserted into the Creed has stood between the East and the West. Attempts to heal the breach at *Florence* in 1439 and at *Bonn* in 1875-1876 failed. It is now generally recognized that any re-union must be on the basis of the original Creed of the undivided Church, still used in all the Eastern Churches including those of Malabar, saying: *Who proceeds from the Father.*

H. B. Swete: *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church.*

C. R. B. Shapland: *The Letters of St Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit.*

Marcus Ward: *The Byzantine Church*, Chapter 13.

H. Watkin-Jones: *The Holy Spirit in the Medieval Church; The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley.*

L. Dewar: *The Holy Spirit and Modern Thought.*

It is not enough to read about the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Church. What matters most is the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church. It is common to call the day of Pentecost the Birthday of the Church. It is more accurate to say that Jesus' work in reconstituting the Church began to take effect on that day, and that ever since the expansion of the Church has been by the power of the Spirit. We began by referring to the neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the modern Church. This has, unhappily, often been the case in the past. Never,

however, has the sense of the presence and guidance of the Spirit been wholly absent, though the Church has been more conscious of the truth and readier to receive it at some times than at others. The total witness of the Church down the years is, as Watkin-Jones says: 'that for all human bankruptcy there is the divine wealth poured forth from the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit'. Of this the history of the Church is the best evidence. The books of Church Historians such as K. S. Latourette and John Foster should be read within the study of the doctrine of the Spirit. In this connection I would urge all students to read especially C. H. Williams: *The Descent of the Dove*, which tells the story of the Church from the point of view of the Spirit. We cannot survey the facts of Church History without seeing what mighty resources are at our disposal; how feeble is life without the Spirit; and what measureless possibilities are open to us in Him who alone can meet our individual and corporate needs.

The evidence of history makes it clear that the Christian has no excuse to confuse the religion of the Spirit with some vague mysticism. It is, and has been since Pentecost, the characteristic work of the Spirit to unfold the meaning of the revelation of God in Christ and to lead men into all the truth implied in the Incarnation. This is the reason why the development of Christian theology, worship and practice has never proceeded simply by deduction from the words and deeds of Jesus. That is, the way of Jew and Muslim. Moses and Mohammed are dead and neither promised that his spirit would abide with his people for ever and lead them into all the truth. Hence the religions of these two great Prophets find their inspiration for the present in the past and draw upon the Law and the Quran. Such is wholly foreign to the genius of Christianity. Experience confirms what history teaches, that the great work of the Spirit, in every age, is to make God in Christ contemporary.

## 10. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

In the course of his excellent book *The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience*, A. L. Humphries draws attention to the fact that most men in the first century A.D. believed in the possibility

of contact with numberless unseen and supernatural powers. This both helped and hindered the Christian doctrine of the Spirit. For example, some of the happenings in the Church at Corinth were not unlike the expressions of spirit possession in the heathen world. Paul had to face the fact that both falsehood and truth claimed to be inspired. He had to define some standard of judgment. So he taught that the confession: *Jesus is Lord* is the criterion of utterances inspired by the Holy Spirit, whereas *Jesus is anathema* indicated demonic possession. This is another indication of the fact, already mentioned, that in those days the Church, the Christian and the Gospel were regarded as the sole sphere of the Holy Spirit. The phrase *the Spirit of Christ* testifies to the belief that in Him there was a unique manifestation of the divine Spirit.

The phrase does not mean, as we have seen, that the New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit with the risen and living Christ. Still less does it mean the mind of Christ as when we say of someone that he has 'a Christlike spirit'. It means that the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit is so close that it is not unfitting to call Him the Spirit of Christ. The great truth here is particularly relevant to Christian thinking in India where the influence of Hindu ideas concerning the spiritual can easily lead to misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine. If anyone is tempted to interpret the indwelling of God to mean that all the events of nature or all the activities of men are equally His work let him remember how Jesus said, concerning the Spirit of God: 'He shall take of mine and show it unto you'. The western addition to the Creed 'and the Son' does safeguard the doctrine of the Spirit from a real danger. It is important to accept with understanding what is implied in 'proceedeth from the Father and (or through) the Son'.

The point is that the Holy Spirit never comes to men in a vacuum. He uses that by which He can speak to men and makes His presence known through the truth He uses. For the first Christians this truth is that which came by Jesus Christ. They knew the Holy Spirit as the One who brought the words and works of Jesus into the living present and declared their meaning. To them, Christ was all in all. They looked at everything in His light. It was the things of Christ

that the Holy Spirit took and used. Their experience of the Spirit, so new and vivid, was wholly of One who worked with Christ as His material. They never thought of Him as mediating God through nature, or inspiring the poet and artist, or bringing the knowledge of God in other ways to non-Christians. To them the Spirit was the One who came with the Christian word and worked the Christian work. So, while certainly regarding Him as distinct from Christ, they named Him the Spirit of Christ.

This raises the question whether, in ascribing no work to Him beyond the sphere of the Church, the New Testament declares the whole truth about the Spirit. We can agree that this is His supreme sphere and yet think that a full account should include all that prepared for Christ and the total impact of God on the world. We rightly call Him the Spirit of Christ in that in the revelation through Christ He has His fullest instrument, but are we to say that He is not also e.g., the power of God in all who care for good and truth? The doctrine that the Spirit indwells the Church need not imply that He does not dwell outside; cf. Acts 17:24 ff.; but the implications of the new vivid experience for what lay beyond the Church were not considered in the Apostolic Age.

At other times in Christian history we notice the fact that the recovery of the Pentecostal experience in the Church does not lead necessarily to the consideration of the work of the Spirit beyond the Church. For example, in eighteenth century England, after a long arid period when it seemed dangerous to the orthodox to think of the ordinary Christian being inspired, the Evangelical Revival led to a new conviction of the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the converted man. Against the protests that it was improper to make such claims, the Evangelicals declared that 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His', and asserted that the New Testament experience of the Spirit is the norm in every age. Thus, after many years of neglect, the Pentecostal fire was rekindled in terms of personal experience and there followed the great age of Protestant missionary expansion which has had its greatest results in this land.

There were some questions, however, which the Evangelicals did not consider. What is the place and work of the Spirit in the world of nature wherein the scientist is making dis-

coveries having such possibilities for good or ill? Does He indwell mankind at large? Is He at work in other religions? These and other questions are urgent for us and demand an answer. The work of the Spirit of God beyond and outside the Church must be brought into our doctrine. The Church is His main but not His only sphere. He works most powerfully in the Christian fellowship and with the Christian revelation but He is not confined to them. He is not a Christian monopoly. The Spirit of Christ, is the universal Spirit of God. To limit Him is to deny Him and to foster that intolerance which, as Jesus told us, is sin against the Holy Spirit Himself. This truth is indeed recognized in the New Testament but is related to the doctrine of the Word e.g., John 1:1 ff.; rather than to that of the Spirit.

Great questions are here raised rather than answered. Indeed the answers are not yet clear. A new chapter in the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is waiting to be written. Surely much of the material towards it exists in the Indian Church. P. Chenchiah is one of those who believe that the time has come to give form and substance to 'Indian Christianity'. He confesses that this has been, so far, an inarticulate hope and vague aspiration, but is convinced that the approach to an Indian conception of Christianity must be in terms of the Holy Spirit. I have been privileged to read a manuscript in which Chenchiah shows, first, how the Holy Spirit begins and enables the transformation of the believer into the image of Christ; and then goes on to trace the profound effects of the doctrine on the major issues of theology and evangelism.

It is the writer's hope that those who begin the study of the doctrine here will go on to take their share, with Chenchiah and others, in working out the doctrine of the Spirit in terms relevant to the Church's situation in India and in seeking the answers to the questions which are bound up with the fulfilment of its mission.

I end this chapter by suggesting a way to help the understanding that Pentecost is always *now* by linking our thought concerning the Holy Spirit with the practice of worship. In the course of each Christian year, attention is focused, from Advent onwards, on the great events by which our redemption has been wrought. This comes to a climax on Trinity



Sunday when we worship the One Triune God who has revealed Himself as such in the whole series of events. Thus from Advent to Trinity there is the proclamation of the mighty acts and being of God. The rest of the year is given to the teaching of the kind of life promised to and required of those who so believe in God. It is not moral instruction as the world knows it but the expression of saving knowledge in the good life of those who have received the Holy Spirit. Christian morality is, indeed, the fruit of the Spirit. In some traditions this fact is recognized by dating the second part of the year not 'after Trinity' but 'after Pentecost'. Would it not be still better to say 'in Pentecost?' This would be one way to demonstrate, at the very heart of Christian life and witness, the vital connection between what God has done for our salvation and the newness of life which we now live in the Holy Spirit.

G. S. Hendry: *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*.

H. P. Van Dusen: *Spirit, Son and Father, Christian Faith in the Light of the Holy Spirit*.

## CHAPTER IV

### GOD THE FATHER

#### 1. THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

THE Christian doctrine of God is based upon the revelation of Himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This revelation is supreme and final, and therefore, in a real sense new, but not in the sense that God suddenly spoke to men in a way completely different from anything known before Jesus came. The Christian revelation is the culmination of that which was given increasingly to Israel and which developed from obscure beginnings, leading up through the Prophets to Christ. There have been those who have suggested that the God of Jesus is the God of the Jews about whom Jesus says nothing that cannot be paralleled in Jewish writings. We cannot assent to this, but we can recognize that it is the exaggeration of a real element of truth. Certainly the teaching of the New Testament is so linked with that of the Old Testament that the whole Bible is one book. We cannot speak adequately about the God and Father of Jesus without beginning from the revelation to Israel.

Every page of the Old Testament takes it for granted that God *is*. Yet there is nothing fixed in the meaning given to the word *God*. The growth of meaning from simple beginnings to high doctrine is bound up with the history of the nation which God chose to be His peculiar People. This fact is important for the understanding of how God reveals Himself, but it makes it difficult to give any simple account of the meaning of the word God in the Old Testament.

Hebrew religion has primitive roots. It shared many of the beliefs, myths and superstitions of other Semitic tribes. Its early theology was influenced by that of other nations through contact with the Canaanites. Yahweh, the God of Israel, first appears as one among many tribal gods, Exod. 3. He is localized at Sinai as a god of the storm, Exod. 19. He moves with His People in the desert as a god of war, Josh. 1. He is concerned with the details of their social life, Deut. 10 ff. He is jealous when they share their loyalty to Him with other

gods, Deut. 12. Yet by the time we come to the Psalms' Yahweh is the one God of Heaven and earth, having the highest moral and spiritual attributes, Ps. 145.

We are concerned with the results of the long story, but unless we pay some attention to the process we may miss that which is essential to the Biblical doctrine of God—His *dynamic* character as the Living God. The revelation of God through the Prophets is summed up in the term, Ethical Monotheism, which affirms belief in one God who is the source of all that is true and good, e.g. Amos 5:6, 14. Israel received this gradually, passing through lower stages to the great conviction of Isa. 45:5. We can trace the process leading to this conclusion in three main stages.

(i) In the period from Abraham to Amos the main doctrine of God is monolatrous i.e., each nation has its own god and Yahweh is God of Israel. The revelation given to Abraham and Moses, and the deliverance from Egypt, are the dominant facts which influence all that follows. The revelation at Sinai was one of majesty and awe. Israel's theology begins in the fear of the Lord. But the relation there established between Yahweh and His People was that of Covenant. This depends primarily on the will of Yahweh, who, of His free initiative, chose Israel and made Himself their champion; and then on the consent of Israel. They believed that He could and would provide for them all that was needed for a good life, especially the gift of the land of their fathers. Should war be necessary to secure peaceful prosperity, Yahweh would be their leader, enabling their warriors by His power. On their side, the Covenant meant full obedience to the will of Yahweh, as He made it known. Disobedience was sin, and its results was separation from Him. The Covenant was with the nation as a whole, and with each member, high or low; but the non-Israelite, with whom no Covenant was made, had no rights. The question as to the right or wrong of killing a Canaanite did not arise, but if a non-Israelite entered into the Covenant as 'the stranger within the gates,' he began to have rights.

In all respects, Yahweh was held to have a dominant and active part in the life of His People. Morality and religion were closely linked. A man's duty to his fellows depended on his duty to God. The belief that Yahweh was holy involved, from the beginning, the recognition of the principles

These promises to Abraham { Seed - people will be blessed  
I will give it to who will rule forever and ever  
I will give a land of country.

of righteousness. He before whom the worshipper shrank in reverence was the source of the inspiration of, and power for, goodness.

There is much in the early doctrine and practice of Israel which had later to be revised, expanded, or even discarded, in the light of the growing revelation of the mind and nature of God, but here is the soil out of which greater knowledge could, and did, grow. From the beginning, Israel was Yahweh's adopted son. The Covenant between them was a moral relationship. There is development, but no break in continuity, when we come to the era of the great Prophets.

(ii) The Prophets from Amos to Deutero-Isaiah were great religious and moral reformers. To them we owe the expression of what is best in the Old Testament doctrine of God. They developed what they received from Abraham and Moses. They deepened the understanding of the Covenant by stressing its moral basis in the divine demand for righteousness. They proclaimed the reality of God and His identity with goodness, rejecting the crude superstitions of Canaan and insisting that belief and morality must go together. They did not introduce any radically new ideas, but their testimony that the holy Saviour of Sinai is the God of all the earth brought the change from monolatry to monotheism. This high doctrine, that there is, and can be, only one God, was not reached easily or suddenly. In the growth of understanding from Amos onwards we can trace certain crucial moments.

(a) The truth that Yahweh of Israel is God of all the nations is implied in Amos' proclamation that He will judge Israel's neighbours. Isaiah and Jeremiah, warning the people that Yahweh used the great empires to punish their disobedience, name Him God of all the earth. In later days there is the suggestion that He will redeem the nations also.

(b) Yahweh is still held to be in Covenant with His own chosen People, but a new note is heard. Just because of this privilege, Israel will suffer the greater punishment for unfaithfulness. Amos, for example, denounced the type of worship which implied that mere sacrifices could please God but did not require the worshipper to be righteous. Nevertheless, there was the firm belief that Israel would be purified and restored. Hosea endorsed the teaching of Judgment on sinners but stressed the divine love working to redeem.

This hope was gathered up in the doctrine of the faithful remnant and reached its climax in Jeremiah's prophecy of a new Covenant. Although the promise was primarily to Israel, it implied an individual and a universal reference—for each man and for all men.

*Robert  
this is from  
Amos's* (c) The idea that Yahweh is God of the whole universe is hinted at as early as Amos, but it became fully explicit in Isa. 40 ff. Ezekiel, in exile, taught that the Temple was to be the centre of the worship of Yahweh, but he never suggested that the divine presence was confined to Jerusalem.

(d) All the Prophets taught that righteousness brings prosperity and sin brings disaster, and they based their belief on the righteous character of God. In Jeremiah and Habakkuk we have the first signs that the suffering of the righteous was a problem for faith. This was met by the teaching of Isa. 53 that the righteous Servant of Yahweh suffers that others may be redeemed.

*Isaiah's  
they all  
the same* (e) The idea of God's holiness was deepened in this period. At first the main stress was on what separated the divine from all else. The Prophets, especially Isaiah, drew out the implication that holiness denotes the utter separation of God from moral evil. Henceforth, the idea of the holy, without losing the earlier 'numinous' significance, goes side by side with that of righteousness in the doctrine of God.

All in all, the work of the Prophets led to a great advance in theology. They learned that the nature of God is revealed supremely in His personal dealings with men and so proclaimed the living God, righteous and loving, manifesting Himself in events. They knew Him for what He is through His relationship with His People and by the moral qualities displayed in His dealings with them: a God 'full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty', Exod. 34:6 f. They drew the conclusion that such a God must be universal in His activity. There is but one righteousness. If the will of God is the moral standard, there can be but one God. Holding fast to this belief, the Prophets went on to the conviction that His righteous will is the only effective force in the universe.

The abstract term *ethical monotheism*, in which we sum up the prophetic doctrine of God, must not be allowed to hide the vivid belief which it expresses, that God is living, active and righteous; and that He expects His People to be righteous. Old Testament monotheism was not reached by the philosopher inferring the existence of a supreme spirit from the unity and order of the universe, but by the prophet expressing his faith in the power of the living God. The God of Israel is never an abstraction; but always living and personal, revealed in history by His deeds. Again and again, the Prophets refer back to the great salvation from Egypt and record what God did, and does, to judge and save. So they taught the People to know and love God by meditating on His deeds and hoping in His promises.

We cannot but regard such a doctrine of God, emerging from much confusion and superstition in the early period as the revelation of truth. Its authority is, on the one hand, that of the disclosure of the secret counsel of God Himself; and, on the other, that of the penetrating character of the Prophets' intuition, Jer. 23:18 ff.; Zech. 1:4 ff.; Dan. 9:2 ff.

(iii) The Prophetic doctrine of God is the basic presupposition of all teaching after the Exile. It was no abstract theory but the principle by which the Jews lived. In Exile the faith of Israel was put to the test. Yahweh had convicted His People of sin but did not cast them away. When they returned home, they were more conscious than ever of the difference between Israel and the nations. The new understanding was embodied in the final revision of the Law. The legalism, intolerance, and bigotry of the later Pharisees has obscured the primary fact that the Jewish devotion to the Law was a zeal for God and righteousness, based on love and faith e.g., Ps. 119, cf. Rom. 9:4. Moreover, in the Jewish Church of this period many of the implications of the Prophets' teaching were worked out and new problems were faced.

The post-Exilic doctrine can be summed up under four heads:

#### (a) The Relation of the One God to the Universe

God is Maker and Master of the whole world. He is the High and Holy One. The stress on divine transcendence led to the development of the idea of intermediary agents, through

whom He intervened to work His will on earth e.g., the Word, Spirit, Wisdom, of God; and the Angels. This did not mean that God was thought to dwell on high and rule by remote control through proxy. His relation to Israel and His nearness to the world made 'deism' impossible, Isa. 57:15, cf. Gen. 1; Ps. 104; Prov. 8:22 ff.; Job 38-41.

### (b) The Relation of God to Men

God is also Maker and Master of men, and in His hand is the destiny of the nations, Ps. 46-48; 99:1 ff.; 113; Dan. 2. This raised the problem of heathen empires, ruling in the name of other 'gods' and more wicked than the Jews, but having lordship over the chosen People. Some answered that the People were still suffering for the sins. But the main answer was the hope that God would one day set up His universal kingdom, Isa. 60; Mal. 4:1 ff. When persecution made the problem intolerable there was a growth of *apocalyptic* which declared that the nations would be either judged and crushed or converted and saved, Dan. 7; Zech. 14.

### (c) The Relation of God to the Individual

A great development of belief in the worth of the individual led to the assertion that man is in some ways like God, Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8; and to that intimate fellowship of the individual with God which is so clear in the Psalter. To call God Father as in Ps. 103:13, and even Mother as in Isa. 66:13, is further evidence of belief in the kinship of human and divine. The problem of the suffering of the good man is taken up in Job, Ecclesiastes, and many Psalms.

### (d) The Practice and Meaning of Worship

Here we find tendencies. On the one hand there is a deeper sense of the gulf between the holy God and weak, sinful men. On the other hand there is an increased understanding of the joys of fellowship. That these could exist together is shown by the fact that the ritual of the Day of Atonement and the Psalter were both used in the Temple.

*Note:* The development of Old Testament Theology here summarised in broad outline should be followed up in other Biblical studies and by the reading of such books as:



C. Ryder Smith: *What is the Old Testament?*

H. Wheeler Robinson: *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament.*

H. E. Fosdick: *A Guide to Understanding the Bible.*

F. C. Grant: *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament.*

S. Mowinckel: *The Old Testament as Word of God.*

E. Jacob: *Theology of the Old Testament.*

G. A. F. Knight: *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament.*

The main value of the study of the development of the idea of God in the Old Testament is in leading us to the result of the process. What did the believing Jew mean by *God* in the days just before Jesus came? We can learn much by considering some of the names used of God.

(a) The Hebrew word for God is *El*, or its plural form *Elohim*, which carries the sense of might and lordship. The special relation of the word to the Patriarchs, Gen. 49:25, suggests that it was associated with God's choosing a People out of the world. The plural does not mean 'gods'. It is an intensive form to stress the majesty of God. His oneness is safeguarded by the use of adjectives and verbs in the singular.

(b) The most commonly used word is the personal name *Yhwh* which we conventionally pronounce *Jehovah* but should probably call *Yahweh*. It is an ancient name but it was used from Moses onwards as the particular personal name for Israel's God. The Jews regarded it as too sacred to pronounce and vowels were never added to the four consonants. Yet in a short form *jah* it was commonly used in names e.g., Elijah (*Yahweh* is my God) and in the praise-shout: *Hallelujah*. It is the great name of devotion and worship, and it carried a growing redemptive significance. The use of this proper name bears witness to the individuality of God. The Hebrews were never in danger of pantheism. The personality of *Yahweh* is so vivid that He is by far the clearest character in the Old Testament. The first word of the Jewish creed runs: *Yahweh* is our God, *Yahweh* is one.

(c) *Adonai*, Lord, is both a regular name for God and the pronunciation given to *Yhwh*. The word is of the essence of the theology of the Old Testament. Religion is the relation between the Lord who commands and the servant who obeys. The lordship of God is further stressed by naming Him *King* e.g., Deut. 33:5; Isa. 6:5; Ps. 47, and by the use of words like *Shaddai* and *Elyon* meaning, probably, Almighty and Most High, respectively.

(d) The term *Living God* is rare but it is implied in the common form of solemn oath 'By the life of Yahweh'. The first use was in contrast with the gods of the nations who die, and the meaning grows richer with the years. The voice of Living God is heard at Sinai, Deut. 5:26. Israel rejoices to be called son of the living God, Hos. 1:10. False prophets pervert the words of the Living God, Jer. 23:36. The good man thirsts for the Living God for He has the fountain of life, Ps. 42:2; 36:9. As the Living God, Yahweh is always sufficient to meet the growing demands on Him, and the worshipper is ever called to new songs of praise, Ps. 96:1.

(e) *Father* is occasionally used e.g., Deut. 32:6; 2 Sam. 7:14, and it is very common in names e.g., Joab (Yahweh is Father). As here and in (b), Indian readers will readily appreciate the significance of using theological terms for men's names.

All the names given to God imply that He has a certain character. This fact is further stressed by the great adjectives applied to Him, especially *holy*, *righteous*, *gracious*. In the vivid Hebrew idiom, Yahweh is a God of holiness; of righteousness; of graciousness. To understand these great words carries us a long way in the understanding of the Old Testament doctrine of God.

(a) *Holiness* is the clearest expression of the divine majesty. In general Semitic use, the word means sacred, in the sense of separate from the secular. The characteristic Biblical application of the word to describe the inner nature of God goes far beyond this. The primary meaning is illustrated in 1 Sam. 21:4; Num. 6:8, but as the thought of Yahweh becomes increasingly moralised the term received a high ethical meaning which made 'The Holy One of Israel' a description of God without parallel. The new moral content together with the majesty of God as separate from man is illustrated in the prophetic reaction to the vision of God as described in Isa. 6, cf. Isa. 5:16, Amos 4:2. At the same time the old mysterious or 'numinous' association of the word, as in 1 Sam. 6:20, remains as the sanction of the new idea and to enforce reverence. The voice of God speaking through the Prophets is still the thunder of Sinai. Isa. 2:6 ff. Shows how the old meaning is used to reinforce the new understanding that the Holy God demands goodness from His people. It is true that language drawn from human life is used of God e.g.,

Gen. 3:8; 11:7, and many human emotions without the defects associated with them, are ascribed to Him e.g. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Isa. 46:1ff.; 63:9; Jer. 12:7 ff; 45:4 f.; Hos. 11:8 f. This also is part of the religious outlook of the Old Testament. But God is never just a glorified man. He is always high, holy, awful, 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; Ps. 103:11 ff.; 145; Isa. 57:15. Yahweh in His majesty confronts man in his creatureliness. Israel never forgot the fear of the Lord, Gen. 28:17; Deut. 4:24; Isa. 2:10 ff; 6:3; Ps. 97:2.

(b) *Righteousness* is primarily the quality which makes God the great judge e.g., Ps. 99:4. He executes righteousness when He declares men innocent or guilty. The basic meaning is conformity to the proper standard whether that be the true measure of the right path. It may refer to social custom, moral obligation or enlightened conscience. What is right for God is that which is true to His nature. From this He never deviates. The righteous God cannot deny Himself. By making a Covenant with Israel, Yahweh accepted a great obligation. His people can look to Him, therefore, for vindication. Thus righteousness, while involving the punishment of sinners, is vitally related to their salvation. The righteous acts of God are also those by which He intervenes to save His people and ensure their well-being. In the Old Testament righteousness is no abstract idea. It is the quality of the personal character of God as seen in the actual experience of life under His control. Because He is righteous, He is Saviour.

(c) *Graciousness* is expressed in the word commonly translated 'loving kindness'. There is no contrast with righteousness, for grace recognizes the moral obligation of the Covenant. In Ps. 89 grace goes along with truth i.e., faithfulness to obligation. The saving grace of God, seen in all manner of deliverance, is due to Yahweh's wide and everlasting loving kindness. If the Psalmists, in particular, stress this characteristic of God it is because the long story of His dealings with Israel is before their eyes, and because their sense of dependence on Him has been deepened by outer circumstances and by spiritual maturity. Obedience, the main outer mark of the religion of Israel, is balanced by trust, the great inner mark. This depends on the grace of Yahweh. All along, He is the faithful God who keeps His Covenant and

is true to the grace which is the heart of the Covenant for those who love and obey.

If we compare Hebrew and Hindu theology, the clearest difference lies in the Old Testament emphasis on the divine activity which enables men to know God. Hinduism has many stories of the active intervention of divine beings in human affairs but they are different from what the Old Testament has to say about God's dealings with, and beyond, Israel. In the Hebrew tradition the stress is on the real distinction of God from man and on the knowledge of God as made possible to man by His active revelation of Himself. The Hebrew did not ask: Does God exist? but: What does He will? How does He act? What does He demand of me? All the answers start from the conviction that God has made plain His holiness, righteousness and grace, and that human life ought to be marked by trust and obedience for it has no meaning except in relation to God. The point is not argued, but the conviction runs through Law, Prophecy and Wisdom. The characteristic Hebrew note is not speculation but testimony. We hear the voice of witness to the God who has revealed Himself in the history of His People, His Word, and His Law. His mighty hand and stretched out arm; His mercy and His judgements, are marks of His revelation. Whereas the philosopher is interested in the nameless absolute, existing beyond time and change, the prophet is concerned with the living and active God, revealing Himself as eternally creative energy, co-operating in events, disclosed not merely through what He is, but through what He does. Indeed it is through what He does that He enables men to know more of what He is.

Again, in strong contrast to views which regard the world as the realm of man's opportunity, is the Old Testament certainty that it is God's world. Human freedom is always under the control of God, e.g. Deut. 30:19; Prov. 16:1, 33; Isa. 55:3; Jer. 18:6. He made the world and He controls nature and history for His own great purpose. Indeed, the recognition that God is active in history is even more important in the Old Testament than that He gave it its beginning. The whole book witnesses to the fact that nature and history are in the hand of God and are the sphere of His providence. For the Hebrew the worst heresy is that which says: Yahweh

will not do good neither will He do evil. Any idea of God as a king without authority is intolerable. All through, His effective rule over Israel, even when the People rebel, is taken for granted. Whatever His People do, He is their Lord, Deut. 28; Amos 2:6 ff. With the emergence of monotheism, this idea was extended to cover mankind. Yahweh is sovereign even over those who do not know Him, Isa. 40:12 ff.; Ps. 93; 97. From Isaiah onwards, it was held that the time would come when Israel and mankind would altogether obey God, Isa. 11:1 ff.; Ezek. 37:15 ff. The belief that God rules the universe now, and so rules it as to set up a perfect kingdom in the future, is the postulate of Apocalyptic, e.g., Dan. 7:27; Osa. 24:1 ff., which looked forward to the coming of One who would bring the present order to an end in judgment and vindication.

There is nothing abstract in the note of expectation characteristic of Old Testament theology. It is bound up with the observation and interpretation of history. The Prophet: appealed to events to vindicate their faith and witness. They pointed to an activity of God, directed towards Israel and the nations, as to which they were convinced He enabled them to prophesy truly. The appeal to history to vindicate faith may seem surprising in so small and futile a nation. The Prophets would not understand this. This size and importance of a nation was irrelevant. It is God, not man, who matters. Faith in Him, not in themselves and their allies, gave the confidence that despite all appearances to the contrary, the time of His vindication is always at hand. For the Old Testament, history has no meaning apart from the fulfilment of the purposes of God.

The story opens with a general introduction to the history of the world and tells how God's purpose in creation of bringing many sons to glory, was frustrated by man's disobedience. Henceforth the sin of man and the grace of God are the great themes. God sets about the work of redeeming and re-creating. To this end He chooses Abraham and we follow the story of his family till it becomes a nation. Then comes deliverance from bondage, establishment in the promised land, and the long sorry story of disobedience. In the course of it we hear of a Remnant through which shall be accomplished the divine purpose for which the chosen People, as a whole, have

proved so dismal a failure e.g., Isa. 7:3; 8:16 ff.; Mal. 3:16 f. Throughout, the dominant theme is the initiative of God who by a grace which he did not deserve, adopted Israel as His first-born and called him out of Egypt.

This is that doctrine of *Election* which is central in Biblical theology. It has pleased God to call the few for the sake of the many. Such choosing is necessary to any great mission. The claim that Israel has a special calling from God is not a matter of human pride but the revelation of the way He has taken to bring all men under His rule. The Old Testament does not explain how the universal God became the God of Israel. It tells why Yahweh of Israel is the one and only God of the universe.

The clearest expression of God's calling is in the Covenant. This is not a bargain but the token of a fellowship of purpose between God and man, confirmed by a bond. The blood of the Covenant at Sinai expresses that communion between God and man whereby Yahweh became the God of Israel and Israel became the People of Yahweh. In Deuteronomy, the Covenant is a mutual engagement to the reformation of religion led by the Prophets. The divine promise, requiring men to keep God's law has many features but all express that confidence in Him which underlies the hope of redemption which is constant in the Old Testament. Always, God is the divine Redeemer pledged to keep Covenant with His People that through them the world may be blessed. It is not in man's power to fulfil the divine demand for righteousness. This can come only by the gift and grace of God. He must help and make anew. Hence, when the Law failed to raise religion to the level required by the Covenant, Jeremiah prophesied a new inner Covenant whereby the Law would be written, by God's power, on men's hearts. This did not come to pass until One, greater than Jeremiah, ratified the New Covenant in His own blood.

The Prophet who first declared the certainty that Yahweh is the one creator and ruler of the universe was quick to see the vision of the love of the one God embracing all men, and to draw the conclusion that He had chosen a People that He might use them to save all, Isa. 45. However, the later Jews failed to maintain this high doctrine. The false belief that Yahweh's peculiar relation to Israel was for Israel's sake only

blinded them to His universal purpose. Judaism, in the unhappy period between the Testaments, never transcended the limits of the nation. There was inconsistency at the very heart. The demand that a convert must become a member of the nation denied the doctor of the one God in whose name the demand was made.

There are those who would sever the link of Christianity with its ancient Hebrew beginnings and have the Church in each land regard the spiritual heritage of the nation as its tutor to Christ. They support their case by arguing that the relation of Christianity to Judaism is that of the opposition of Gospel to Law. We, however, are not concerned with the debased Judaism which Jesus denounced and which destroyed Him, but with the doctrine of God which He accepted and fulfilled. We follow Paul in basing the new way of salvation for all, on the appeal to the one God and the true universalism declared by the Prophets, cf. Rom. 3:29 ff. We may not forget that we belong to the New Israel which God called into being to fulfil His purpose when Old Israel failed. We are indeed the children of Abraham and the heirs of the promises.

We have considered the religious development from Abraham up to the clear and explicit monotheism of Isaiah. Nowhere else do we find like progress from humble origins to lofty beliefs. In India the development from early polytheism took a very different course and ended in pantheism, and, apart from the passing reference to Varuna, without a strong ethical note. It is significant that all the religions which stress the holiness and personality of God derive from the ethical monotheism of the Old Testament Prophets. Of these, later Judaism is outside our scope but we shall touch on Islam to contrast its doctrine of the oneness and almightiness of God with that of the Gospel. Meanwhile we turn to Him who, born of the line of David and under the Jewish Law, carries to fulfilment what the Old Testament began to teach concerning God.

N. H. Snaith: *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament.*

G. E. Wright: *The Challenge of Israel's Faith.*

C. R. North: *The Old Testament Interpretation of History.*

H. Wheeler Robinson: *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament.*



- A. Nairne: *The Faith of the Old Testament*.  
 T. H. Robinson: *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*.  
 J. Skinner: *Prophecy and Religion*.  
 G. E. Wright: *The God Who Acts*.  
 M. H. Harrison: *God Acts*.  
 H. H. Rowley: *The Re-discovery of the Old Testament*.  
 H. Knight: *The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness*.  
 H. F. D. Sparks: *The Old Testament in the Christian Church*.  
 R. V. G. Tasker: *The Old Testament in the New Testament*.  
 G. E. Phillips: *The Old Testament in the World Church*.  
 D. S. Russell: *Between the Testaments*.  
 F. M. Cross Jr.: *The Ancient Library at Qumran*.  
 K. Stendall: *The Scrolls and the New Testament*.  
 F. F. Bruce: *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

## 2. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus was reared in Jewish piety. He took the Old Testament as the starting point of His teaching. All that He said about God was based on the ethical monotheism of the Prophets. He spoke to men whose religious convictions had grown out of the long history which the Prophets had interpreted as the story of God's dealing with His People, and had translated into the utterances of living faith. Thus, Jesus did not have to begin by teaching that God is One, Holy, and Gracious. He assumed all this and then went on to fulfil it by drawing out its deepest meaning. He did not offer proofs of the existence of God or definitions of His attributes. His approach was wholly Hebraic in that He began with the certainty that God is the living and active Lord. When He proclaimed the Kingly Rule of God He built on foundations already deeply laid.

Nevertheless when He came unto His own, His own received Him not. This is the judgment on the Judaism of Jesus' day. It is true that the Old Testament was its Bible, the Psalter its hymn book, and the Law the basis of its morality. There were still many truly pious people among the Jews. Yet, in general, religion had degenerated sadly in the period between the two Testaments. Morality was bound by convention and had its chief expression in the legalism of the Pharisee, moving between fear and pride. Theology overstressed the transcendence of God. There was a strong expectation that a new age was soon to come by a sudden

irruption from the beyond, but this coming of the Kingdom of God was regarded, for the most part, as the act of the far-off King, and men had little to do with it. In so far as there was hope it had more to do with vengeance on the enemies of Israel than with personal faith.

Here Jesus came to grips with the religion of His day. He did not deny that the Holy One of Israel must be worshipped in awe and reverence, but He bade men call Him Father and told them that the Kingdom is a gift offered to all. No one could make claims on God; not even if they happened to be born Jews. God's offer was by His grace; to be received by those prepared to trust and obey. It is in respect of the Fatherhood of God and His Kingly Rule that we see what was *new* in Jesus' teaching. *It is true that we can find parallels to most of Jesus' actual words in the Old Testament and later Jewish writings, but the whole spirit and inwardness of the teaching is new, going beyond even what the greatest Prophets taught. The same Jesus who confesses the holiness and majesty of God declares Him to be the loving Father who seeks sinners till He finds them and brings them home rejoicing. God in Heaven and God with us is One God.*

The simple fact is that Jesus taught men to *re-think* God. Those to whom He spoke were not without a true knowledge of God. They had learned much from the Prophets. All this Jesus took for granted. He went further. The new which He added transformed the old which He assumed. If we read the Psalms and the Gospels side by side we see how rarely the Psalmists call God Father but how Jesus could not refrain from using the word. It summed up all His own personal relations with God. From beginning, Luke 2:49, to end, Luke 23:46, He lived His days on earth as the Father's Son. When He talked about God, He avoided the language of philosophy and abstract theology. He never referred to the 'First Cause' or to the 'attributes' of God. It was always 'Father', Matt. 6:9,32; Luke 11:13. So He thought about God and so He taught others to think about Him. He would have His own life of Sonship to be the pattern of theirs. The Son of Man who knew Himself to be at home with the Father invited all the sons of men to make the same act of faith. To those who were ready to believe that all things are in the

Father's hands and to make that belief the rule of life, Jesus promised all the power, confidence, hope which are the birth-right of the sons of God.

It is fitting to point out here that whenever men have taken Jesus at His word, this has come to pass. The great succession of men and women, from the first disciples onward, who have come home to the Father through Christ, have the faith, hope and love which nothing in this world can overcome. They confess that they have had times of doubt; they do not claim to know everything; but they press on, looking unto Jesus, and they have not been disappointed. They have found the peace which passes understanding. They walk through this perplexing world as knowing the way. They have learned that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.

All this has been learned from what Jesus taught about God. The teaching, however, is never separated from the life which He lived and the deeds which He did. The works of healing are a witness to the power and love of God, John 9; and a sign that the Kingdom has come, Luke 11:20. The powers of the Kingdom are present in Jesus. When He forgives sins, He is revealing God. He makes credible by what He does the doctrine which He proclaims. The work and the words of Jesus belong together and both declare the Father and His loving purposes.

The Gospels, in which all this is recorded, have never ceased to create in men a certainty about God which is inseparable from faith in Christ. The knowledge of God as Father, transmitted through the Gospels, is not an imitation of the faith which Jesus had in God, but is the result of the faith that Jesus is Lord and that no one comes to the Father but by Him. For the Christian, faith in Christ and the knowledge of God are bound up together. Nor does he simply look back to the New Testament for he knows that Christ is still present, through the Holy Spirit, revealing the Father as He did, in the days of His flesh by all that He did, and said, and was.

We shall be considering, in the next chapter, the implications of all this as regards our belief in *one* God. For the moment it is sufficient to stress the fact that faith in Christ neither infringes the sole supremacy of God nor dishonours

His majesty. We are Christian monotheists because, having seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. The point at issue here is that the Christian thinks of God in terms of Christ. Whatever knowledge of God there was before Christ, or is apart from Christ, we know that God has the character in which we meet Him in Christ. Now we are certain that God is Love and that all His creatures are the objects of His care. We know that this world of time and space is the Father's world. What He has made and seen to be good is neither evil nor maya. We have the obligation to challenge other doctrines held by those living around us by the Gospel facts, and to help men to see the difference which Jesus has made to thoughts about God. So W. B. Pope, the great Methodist theologian, came home from a meeting of the revision committee of the catechism saying: 'I have won a great victory. The first question has been: What is God?—an Infinite and Eternal Spirit. I have got them to alter that and the question is to be: Who is God?—Our Father'.

What this means may be illustrated by the experience of Paul, a man in Christ, who realized what the fact of Christ implied for the doctrine of God. It was Paul's great discovery that because Jesus was Christ and Lord, the character of God was much more gracious than he had learned in Judaism: that God's true relation with men was not in terms of law but of the holy love seen in Jesus. Thus Paul was the first to realize that the Gospel meant the transformation of Jewish theology. Matthew had seen that Jesus' teaching transcended the laws taught by the Pharisees, but Paul saw that Jesus was in conflict with the very essence of legalism.

Saul the Jew had been brought up to believe that God's relation to men was one of recompense. If a man kept the Law, he had good standing with God. He found that he could not keep the whole Law and so was not just in the eyes of God. Saul's God was the great Judge whose demands he acknowledged but could not meet. At first, the Gospel offended him because it denied this theology. To call one who died the cursed death on the gallows, the Christ, was to say that recompense is not the principle of God's relation to men. Then Saul met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and knew Him to be Christ and Lord. It meant that his whole doctrine of God had to be revised.

Henceforth Paul knew God to be the God and Father of Jesus. His true character is seen in the holy love of the Crucified; His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. God was no longer, for Paul, One who so reckoned sins that He had to be reconciled to men. He Himself had taken the initiative and Paul knew that God in Christ was reconciling sinners to Himself. So Paul preached a gospel of reconciliation which concerned all men, Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; 5:19. It meant that for Paul the essence of the Gospel was not simply the confession that the crucified Jesus is Christ in virtue of the Resurrection, but a new doctrine of God as Love, revealed in the grace of Christ and experienced in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

This stress that the heart of the Gospel is a new doctrine of God shows that the difference between the Christian and the Jew is not simply that the former believes that Messiah has come but the latter still awaits Him. It is a fundamental matter of what each believes to be the truth about God. When the idea of God was 'Christianized', the Jew's fear of God and attempt to win His favour by obeying the Law became changed into the Christian's reverent and childlike trust in the Father, and obedience by love. Paul's knowledge as Luther was later to put it, that 'now we have gracious God', explains the peculiar intimacy with which he speaks of God and his concern for men.

After the experience on the Damascus Road, Paul could never again think of God as the 'Wholly Other'. Now he had the mind of Christ, and in Christ he made new discoveries of what the word *God* means. It was not that Jesus is another God, but that he could not think of One without the Other. Christ is the Image of the Father. His life and death are supreme expression of that holy love which is the secret of the Kingdom. Love, not recompense, is the principle by which God works. Therefore the whole course of man's salvation depends on God's initiative. Believing this, Paul found that God helped Him in every trouble and supplied every need. So he bore his troubles, and even welcomed them, because they brought him fresh discoveries of the meaning of the Father's love.

J. S. Stewart: *A Man in Christ.*

C. A. Anderson Scott: *Christianity according to St Paul.*

This illustration of how for one man the fact of Christ disclosed the truth about God is typical of the whole New Testament approach to the doctrine of God. Each writer, in his own way, relates the Gospel facts to the meaning of the word God, on the understanding that the supreme concern of human life is to know who God is, e.g., John 1:18; 3:16; 4:10. Thus the Christian doctrine of God derives not merely from what Jesus taught about the Fatherhood but from the apostolic belief that, He, in all He said, and did, and was, is the supreme and final revelation of God. The Incarnation, whether we sum it up by saying that God was in Christ reconciling; or that the Word became flesh, is the central point of Christian theology and must be allowed to determine the meaning we give to 'God'.

The New Testament was written by men who started from a religious tradition which knew God to be living and personal. They did not speculate about the divine being and they had no interest in the absolute of philosophy. They took for granted that God is. They knew Him, in the light of Jesus, to be Father. The love of God was revealed in Him who, for our salvation, came down from Heaven and died and rose again. All doubts were swallowed up in the wonder of this saving act which, though happening in a moment of time, was significant of the eternal nature of Him who brought it to pass. Yet the stress on love in the New Testament does not omit the prophetic element of sternness. There is the wrath of God from which sinners need to escape. The reaction of the holy God to evil is still to condemn it. The love of God is holy love. It is no complacent acceptance of men as they are, but a will for their good and an anger against their sin.

For the Jews who accepted Jesus as Lord and Christ, the new faith either answered or rendered irrelevant the unsolved problems of the Old Testament. However, the success of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles raised new problems. The Gentile converts acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus, but many did not go on to 'Christianize' their doctrine of God. They came from a religious background where the quest for unity among the many gods had led, in a manner not unlike the process in ancient India, not one living God but to an infinite abstract principle to which the many gods had some

relation. Gentile Christians tended to assume that they knew God and now had to interpret Jesus in terms of what they knew. They failed to see that Jesus had given an utterly new meaning to the word. Some of the Apologists, in the attempt to convert educated pagans, suggested that they had simply to enlarge their existing doctrine of God by the facts of Jesus, and if the facts did not always fit in with their preconceptions, then so much the worse for the facts. Others vainly attempted to unite the Greek view of a passionless absolute with the Old Testament doctrine of God as Creator and King. In one way or another, the failure to recognize that Christ made all things new, including the old half-truths about God, and so to interpret God by Christ, led to inadequate and sub-Christian accounts of both God and Jesus.

The vastness of the problem must not be minimized. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, yet the materials for building a Christian theology come out of both Jewish religion and Greek philosophy. We have seen that Hebrew religion had little philosophy in it. The doctrine of God was worked out by men of deep moral insight rather than by abstract thinkers. The God of the Old Testament is not primarily the One who explains the universe, but the creative being whose will is revealed in history and nature, and especially in the Law and the Prophets. But the most significant contribution of the Greek mind to religion came from philosophers who were concerned to understand the world, and reached a form of monotheism by the rejection of polytheism as irrational.

In the early Church these two streams flow together. The theological task of that day was to build a doctrine of God on the basis of the Biblical facts, with the help of Greek philosophy. There are the beginnings of this process in the New Testament as when Paul uses some Stoic terms and, more important, when John takes the idea of the *Word* to interpret Jesus. But many of the later teachers fell far below the New Testament standard. They failed to see that the doctrine of God as known in Christ calls for the utter surrender of the mind of Christ as the only way to the Father. The failure to interpret 'God' in the way demanded by the Gospel facts may be illustrated by two brief but significant examples.

*Logos → word is called Greek eastern philosophy*



(i) In the Greek East, the influence of philosophy led to the idea that God could not suffer. The tendency to think of ultimate Godhead in terms of an impossible absolute led logically to the semi-pagan Arian doctrine that Christ is 'not true God of true God' but simply a worshipful creature. The Church rejected this conclusion but did not go on fully to Christianize its doctrine of God. The Creed declared that there is one God, but the idea of divine impassibility had so claimed the imagination of the eastern Church that many, in fact, worshipped two Gods. On the one hand, there was God the Father, omnipotent, unchangeable and remote; on the other hand was God the Son, suffering, crucified and risen. Arius was defeated in the Councils, but he so triumphed in the belief of many Christians that his influence abides till now in the confusion over the word 'impassible'. The ancient controversies in the East led to the Church accepting doctrines of God by obedience rather than as clear expressions of faith. There are still many Christians for whom 'Jesus' means much, but 'God' little.

(ii) In the Latin West, the doctrine of God was influenced by the concept of law, with the result that traditional western piety centred on the idea of God as Law-giver and Judge. This led to a sub-Christian doctrine of salvation and an elaborate system of penance, both suggesting that a man can earn his own salvation; and to an unscriptural doctrine of predestination. All this, again, was due to the failure to take Jesus at His word and let Him determine the meaning of 'God'. Even the vivid recollection of the person of Jesus, so characteristic of western piety, did not prevent an arbitrary despot usurping the place of the Father. There was point in Luther's charge that the Church kept the divinity of Christ, yet failed to see God in Christ.

Many other examples can be found in the history of the doctrine of God down the Christian centuries to our own day—some of them in this country. The story is well worth further study, if we are prepared to learn from both failure and success, that a truly Christian theology must build on God as He has revealed Himself, and not on man as he thinks and feels. The Christian doctrine of God is not the result of human ideas but of God's self-revelation received in humble awe and trust. We know Him, as we have stressed above,

in the character in which He comes to us as the God and Father of Jesus Christ. It is in this light that we shall now proceed to consider the meaning of the three great words of the Creed—*Father; Almighty; Creator*

G. L. Prestige: *God in Patristic Thought.*

S. Cave: *Doctrines of the Christian Faith.*

H. M. Hughes: *The Christian Idea of God.*

J. K. Mozley: *The Impassibility of God.*

C. S. Paul: *The Suffering God.*

J. Sandegren: *The Suffering God.*

W. R. Matthews: *God in Christian Thought and Experience.*

S. C. Neill: *The Christians' God.*

### 3. THE FATHER

What has been said already should make it impossible for us to consider thinking of the Fatherhood of God apart from Jesus. We do not say that there is no knowledge of God apart from the revelation in Christ. We do claim that we know God as Father, and come home to our Father, only through Him. Jesus is, as Snaith puts, it the only glass through which we can see clearly. Without this help fallen man is so short-sighted that he cannot focus properly; everything he sees is blurred and distorted. The Christian has to tell those who claim to know God in other ways that something richer is available for them. He does this, not out of pride, but for their sakes. Men must take seriously Paul's argument, Rom. 1:18 ff., that no evidence, apart from Christ, can lead to the true God. If the search for knowledge, or the abandonment of devotion, or the contemplation of beauty, or the zeal for morality could have led men to the Father, many, including the Hindus, would have found their true home long before Jesus came. But there is no *marga* which can lead the world to the God and Father of Jesus.

There are, of course, ways in which any one can speak of God as Father. All who hold that He is the author and preserver of life can name Him so. They can believe that He who has brought the world into being has taken a great deal of care. They can agree that He has laid down the conditions of the good life. They can acknowledge that He has done much to enrich what He has made. They can say all this and more. It is all true and good; but this by no means

covers what the Christian knows about God. All this could be said even if Jesus has never come. But He has come, and He has taught us to think of God as Father in a way that we could not know otherwise. It is important that Christians should recognize this and not confuse the purely Christian concept with other general ideas. In this respect, as in others, all that is true and good is gathered within the Gospel but we must not so equate it with these things as to leave out the most important thing of all, which Jesus came to give. Cf. Matt. 5:17 ff.; 6:1 ff.; 7:9 ff.; 10:29 f.; 18:14.

We have seen that part of the uniqueness of Jesus lies in the fact that He was One for whom God was always the most real of all beings and to whose consciousness He was always present as Father. We do not say simply that the Fatherhood of God was the new thing He taught. The men of the Old Testament could think of God caring for His children like a Father and they spoke much of His loving kindness. But in Jesus' teaching we hear a new note of seeking love. His Father did not simply wait for sinners to return penitent but went out to seek the lost, reclaiming them and rejoicing over them. This goes beyond anything in the Old Testament. Moreover, Jesus brought to the centre what was only at the circumference of Old Testament theology. For the Prophets, God was primarily King and only incidentally Father. For Jesus the King is Father. The concept of Fatherhood takes precedence over all else. Other ideas are not eliminated. God is still King and Judge. His law prevails over all that happens. But first and foremost, He is the Father of His children. The love which seeks until it finds is the Father's love. In Jesus' whole life and teaching the character of Fatherhood is the supreme issue because for Him it is of the very nature of God. We are able to call God Father, in the way we do because we live in the newness of life given through Jesus. Cf. Matt. 6; 7:7ff.; Luke 12:22ff.; 15:1ff.; John 5:17ff.; 14:6ff.; Rom. 8:15.

The parable of Matt. 20:1ff. offers a vivid illustration. Peter asked what was to be the reward for those who had left all and followed Jesus. He replied by telling a story of a farmer hiring coolies for a day's work. Some were hired early in the morning and worked a full day. Others were hired later and worked part of a day. Some worked only

for an hour in the cool of the evening. When the work was done, the farmer paid these last a full day's wage, arousing the hope in the others that they would get more. When they did not, they grumbled. The farmer pointed out that he could do as he liked with his own money. Peter probably thought as we do that the action was legitimate but not very reasonable. But what Jesus is telling Peter is that if he serves only for what he can get, he will not be pleased with what he does get. Peter must realize that God is not a master who pays an exact recompense for work done. He is a Father, and like any good father, He loves all His children alike. Whoever heard of an elder son in a good home grumbling because his younger brother has as much of the father's love though he came into the home later? The Christian way of calling God Father belongs to the sphere of personal relations into which men come when they are adopted into the family of God by new birth.

We may note that there is one point wherein we might do well to take up and develop a hint in the Old Testament. Isa. 49:15; 66:13 spoke in terms of the Motherhood of God. We ought not to think of the divine Fatherhood as if it were served from the idea of Motherhood. Was it not because of the eternal unity of both in God that man, in order to be in His image, must be male and female, Gen. 1:27? Had the Church recognized fully that as truly as God is our Father, so He is our Mother, the way would not have been open to heterodox cults of the Virgin Mary.

For the Christian the most important thing about God is that He is love. It is not merely that Jesus taught this, but that His life and death are the final manifestation of what love means to God. The primary fact is that Christ died for each and all, and that herein God was at work to reconcile the world unto himself. Without this certainty man's conception of the love of God is vague and unsure. Once he knows that God was in Christ, he learns that God is One who desires not the death of a sinner but rather that he shall turn from his wickedness and live, i.e., enjoy the new and true life which is the gift of God at conversion. For this, God was willing, in Christ, to empty Himself of all but love, and come down from Heaven to see to the matter in His own way, even to the limit of the Cross. From the stand-

point of mere human thinking about God, the Cross is either a scandal or folly, but this is the way in which God has chosen to work, and in so doing to reveal His true nature. It is the revelation of Christ, crucified and risen, that the divine Fatherhood must be interpreted in terms of suffering and victorious love. This must govern the meaning we give to the *attributes* of God.

There is a type of theology which devotes much space to the detailed consideration of the power, wisdom, holiness, righteousness and other attributes of God, dealing with each separately. It fails to convince because it has not sufficiently recognized the inadequacy of dealing with the various qualities of God as separate items. The fact that our human thinking has to separate the qualities and consider them one by one must not be allowed to divide what exists as a unity in God. Even when we discuss a man, we err if we treat him now as a husband, now as a businessman, now as a friend, now as a worshipper. However we look at him, he is always the same man. The better the man, the more firm is the unity of his character. There is something wrong when a man presents one face to his wife, another to his business associates, another to his pastor. The noblest men have about them a fundamental simplicity. In God, this fact reaches its highest expression. In Him an infinite variety is held in utter simplicity. He is not sometimes holy, and at other times loving, but holiness and love are always together in Him, and always perfect.

There are certain attributes of God as we know Him in Christ, but we must not take them in isolation as though each related to a separate divine activity. To ascribe, for example, creation to His power; wrath against sin to His holiness; and redemption to His love, is bad theology. It leads to confusion in thinking, worshipping, and living. The divine power in creation is conditioned by holy love. God's judgments are expressions of holy love. The motive behind our salvation is holy love. In all that He does, His power, love, wisdom and holiness are manifest. Christian history is strewn with errors due to the isolating of divine attributes. Many popular misconceptions such as, for example, that implied in the question: Why does not God stop war? are due to the failure to relate the power and wisdom of God to His holy

love. A common error today arises from the tendency to speak as if love, unqualified by other attributes, were the full expression of God's character and may lead to the blasphemy: 'God will forgive; that's His job.'

Hence it seems good to gather the discussion of the divine attributes under the word Father, and to view them together as giving meaning to the divine Fatherhood, as revealed by Jesus. Remembering that as the sum of a man's qualities does not make the man, so a catalogue of God's attributes does not define God, but is merely a useful way to stress the various aspects in which we know the Father, we can safely go on to say that the God and Father of Jesus is powerful, holy, righteous, wise, and loving; and to consider briefly what these words mean.

(i) Jesus had no doubt about the Old Testament witness to the Power of God. The thought of God as the almighty maker and sustainer of the world is essential to the Christian doctrine of God. What it means, that the universe depends on God and serves His ends we shall be considering below. For Jesus, God's power was most relevant to the coming of the Kingdom and the needs of sinful and suffering men. The Father is all-powerful, not in the sense that He can and will do anything and everything, but that His will to save is supreme and effective. All things are possible, but only in terms of the grace of God.

(ii) The Holiness of God carries a deeper meaning in the New Testament than it does in the Priestly documents of the Old Testament. The Gospel recognizes that the Holy is the distinctive category of religion. It is that which arouses the sense of awe as man stands before God. We give the highest ethical content to holiness but we do not simply equate it with goodness. When we stand in the presence of God it is not merely as morally imperfect but as profane creatures before the Holy God. The worship of God should arouse the religious sense of awe. The Father is not some good friend with whom we can stroll hand in hand. There is a tremendous mystery in the relationship. The great experience of Isaiah in the Temple, Isa. 6, is paralleled by Peter's experience when he sees Jesus and cries: Depart from me! Luke 5:8. Cf. R. Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*.

(iii) In Christianity, however, as we have said, holiness is deeply ethical. The Holy God is *Righteous*, not tolerating

evil. He demands not only adoration but goodness. In the Bible, sin is always defined in relation to God. Jesus manifested the righteousness of God not only in being without sin, but positively in always doing good. What we see in Him is what God wants from us all. When Jesus condemned sin, He was expressing the divine attitude which so hates sin as to send the Son to die and so expose its true nature. The Christian account of right and wrong derives from our knowledge of God's righteousness. When we sin, we do not merely fail ourselves and our friends; we deny the Father whose righteous demands are laid upon us. Indeed, we know our sin only as we stand before God in Christ. He who is goodness incarnate shatters all human complacency, making men not only contrite for their sins but ashamed also of their best. The divine goodness seen in Jesus is the principle of the Father's rule. He who is righteous is also faithful. He cannot deny Himself. He ever conforms to His own standard as revealed in Christ, 1 John 1:5 ff.

(iv) The meaning of the Father's Wisdom is best expressed in Paul's argument to the Corinthians where he shows that what men think to be folly often turns out to be a greater wisdom than they know, 1 Cor. 1:18ff. When God chooses what the world calls weak, to put the strong to shame, He is wise. When He chose poor Israel rather than rich Egypt to be the bearer of salvation to the world, He was wise. In the days of the early Church no human wisdom would have thought it possible that the great Empire would be conquered by the Church. Christ Himself is the supreme example of the divine wisdom. The child in the stable, the rejected prophet, the crucified blasphemer was folly and scandal to the world; but in the wisdom of God, He was the Saviour of the world. The doctrine of divine Providence, which we shall consider below, declares that the divine wisdom seen in the story of our redemption is manifest in all that concerns our lives. All the time He is guiding His children in ways which they may neither understand nor appreciate immediately but, in His wisdom He knows what He is doing and men are truly wise when they are content to trust Him.

(v) The great new thing in the Gospel is the revelation that the almighty, holy, righteous, wise God is Love. The Father in whose power Christ put His trust and whose wise and



holy will He obeyed, even though it led Him to the Cross, is the God who loves. It is Jesus who has made love the central and normative quality in our doctrine of God. All that He said and did had the love of God as its distinctive meaning. So the love of God in Christ is the great Christian theme, and the Whole New Testament is summed up in the great affirmation: *God is Love*. In one sense the love of God is the theme of the whole Bible which describes the relations between God and man in terms of a drama of the Lover and the beloved. Yet we, to whom the love of God is the supreme thing in life, should not forget that it is God's most difficult task to persuade men that He love them, and there are still many who refuse to believe it. In the Old Testament there is only an approach to the full certainty of the New Testament. And in the New Testament the writers do not argue, from the facts of nature and history in general, that God loves men. They see no ground for believing the love of God apart from His redeeming action in Christ; but having that, they go on to the supreme declaration, beyond which nothing more can be said, not simply that God loves but that He *is* love.

We should take note at this point that there are difficulties in using the word 'Father' for God. There are many who are not attracted by the word because their experiences of human fatherhood are not happy. They might say: 'I did not like my father. He was not much of a father'. In that case he was not much like God! Remember that when Jesus wants to illustrate the nature of God, He tells a story about a *good* man. The father of the prodigal son was a good father and therefore could be cited to illustrate the true meaning of fatherhood. The good human father can point to the perfect Fatherhood of God, but even the best is but a faint image of Him.

We remember, also, that the best human fathers do not show the mild indulgence that many children seem to expect. They want their fathers to be benevolent and tolerant. They resent discipline and chastening. The 'good' father is expected to have an amiable smile, a blind eye, and an open pocket. But we wholly misrepresent Jesus' teaching if we remove from our ideal of Fatherhood all thought of severity. It is not easy to think of a loving Father being angry but Jesus says clearly

that sin moves Him to wrath. His love is holy. The highest human experience shows that love and anger can go together. The holier the love the more indignant it is against sin. The good father must act when his children go wrong; it is the bad father who takes no notice. So with God, it is not that love and wrath alternate in Him but that wrath is the way in which love expresses itself in certain circumstances. Our Father's care would be less than it is were He not angry with us when we sin. God is not angry with things or puppets; it is because He calls us to be sons, and sin breaks the relationship, that He is angry when we go wrong. Anger and love are not opposites. The love which has no capacity for wrath is not perfectly holy. It is only perfect love which can 'be angry and sin not'. The Father's love is angry with sin just because He longs to save His children from their sins.

There is a striking passage in which Peter bids those who know God as Father 'spend their lives on earth in fear', 1 Pet. 1:17. This seems a strange conclusion. Yet there is a sense in which fear and fatherhood are not contradictory and we ought to make room for both in our thought about God. Peter says quite clearly that God is Father and therefore He is to be feared. There is a fear which follows from the true meaning of fatherhood. We do not easily understand this. We want to make God a Father after our own imperfect ideas of fatherhood; a weak indulgent Eli with neither power nor purpose to restrain his wilful and disobedient children, 1 Sam. 2:12ff. We say: God is love; why should we fear? This is to misunderstand fatherhood as Jesus teaches it. We believe Him to be the Image of God, and we know how stern He could be, e.g., Matt. 23. When He bade us say 'Father' when we pray, He was not putting easy good-nature of the Throne. He bade us remember also that prayer begins with adoration; with the acknowledgment that God is God, described in the Old Testament as 'the fear of the Lord'. It has been pointed out that evil is a more terrible thing to the family than to the state. So, if it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10:31, it is not less so because they are the Father's hands.

There is, of course another sense in which fear is a bad thing and it is in Christ that men have learned of the love which drives out fear, 1 John 4:18. John does not mean that

love and fear are incompatibles, or that there is no room for fear in the heart that knows the love of God. He is thinking of the cringing fear of the slave. There is no such fear for the Christian. But there is place for the fear due to the sense of danger as a man lives in this world, subject to so many temptations. St Theresa bids us: 'Keep love and fear by you on your journey. Love will quicken your footsteps and fear will make you look where you set your foot down. Thus armed, you will be secure from pitfalls.'

The love that will not let the sinner off, will neither let him go. The love in the light of which sin stands condemned is also the power by which it is overcome. This is manifest in all that Jesus said and did. It reaches its climax at the Cross. Had He not so died, the world would have remained ignorant and unsure of many things. But now we are certain that the ultimate reality of the universe is love bearing sin. The Cross represents the limit beyond which even love cannot go; and the Resurrection declares that nothing can conquer love.

For this reason, Christians ought always to begin at the Cross when they talk of God as Father. This is what we mean when we say that no one comes to the Father but by Christ. It is possible to begin at the wrong end and to say that God is a God of justice and then to add His mercy; to say that He is a righteous God and also a Saviour. But those who begin by coming to the Father through Christ know that first and always He is the God who saves. Only so can the paradoxes of the Christian doctrine of God make sense and all the manifold attributes of God be gathered within the great word *Father*. We speak of God as on high and near; as judging and loving; as holy and gracious; as to be feared and not to be feared. When we come to the Father through the Son; these all fall into place. Otherwise they remain contradictions.

There is one more great word to be mentioned. Grace is a word which looms large in the story of Christian controversy. It has a long and complex history in which many irrelevant and harmful associations have gathered around it. We must hold fast to the central fact that grace means love in action. The Old Testament meaning of the personal favour of God is enlarged in Christian experience so as to emphasize

the free and undeserved character of grace. Thus it comes to mean the Father's love active in and on behalf of mankind. It is not simply His goodwill towards us, but His power working in us. It may take many forms, but always there is the divine grace prior to any good in us. The working of grace does not, however, cancel the freedom of man's will. It always works through it and not apart from it. Indeed the only true human freedom is in the realm of the divine grace.

How, then, can we reconcile the teaching of Eph. 1 and Rom. 9-11 on Predestination with God's Grace and man's freedom? In fact, the doctrine of predestination is the strongest affirmation of Grace. The Grace which moves towards us, in Christ, from the very heart of the Father is free. As sinners we do not deserve it; as creatures we cannot earn it. God loved us before ever we were born and both our life and our salvation are the gifts of His love. This love, therefore, is sovereign. It controls all that God wills and does and is not controlled by anything we will or do. His will of love is the supreme power in the world and the final arbiter of human destiny.

In its working, the Grace of God is mysterious. When it meets men in the Gospel it seems to attract some irresistibly, but to leave others unattracted or even hostile. We do not know why this is because all are sinners in need of Grace. But God knows. We must trust His wisdom here as in everything else; just as we trust Him alone for our salvation, which we owe to His Grace and not our merits. In short, the doctrine of predestination is not a claim to knowledge but a confession of faith.

There are some who are not content with this and claim, to know that God, before creation, decreed that some should receive Grace and be saved and others not. This is to ascribe to God some other motive than the love revealed in Christ and to make men the victims of fate. As to why some will and others will not accept we ought not to enquire. That is a mystery to which only God knows the answer and it were better to leave it to Him.

W. B. Selbie: *The Fatherhood of God.*

J. Scott Lidgett: *The Fatherhood of God.*

J. Oman: *Grace and Personality.*

H. H. Rowley: *The Biblical Doctrine of Election.*

P. S. Watson: *The Concept of Grace.*

C. Ryder Smith: *The Bible Doctrine of Grace.*

A. T. Hanson: *The Wrath of the Lamb.*

#### 4. ALMIGHTY

To understand the theological meaning of this word we begin with the Old Testament. The English word is a literal rendering of the Latin all-powerful from the Greek all-ruling, but the Hebrew is the strong old word *Shaddai* which the Rabbis interpreted, with sound insight, as *He who is sufficient*, Gen. 17:1; Ruth 1:20 f.; Ps. 19:1; Job 5:17. God is sufficient. He has power to fulfil His purpose. There are no limits to the divine initiative. The Father has an effective answer to every problem of His children.

One difficulty arises when we stress the first syllable of the word. Of course God can do *all* that He wills to do. Does this mean that He can do, or wants to do, anything or everything? It certainly does not mean that God can do anything that we can think about or put into words. There are some things that even God cannot do. He cannot make a thing at once black and not black. He has made the world in a certain way and He cannot treat it as if it were otherwise. Nor can He do anything contrary to His nature as Father. He is the God of truth and so He cannot lie. He is righteous and so can do no evil. He is love and so cannot be passive in the presence of man's sin and misery. Yet there are many things which men cannot do but He can, because He is God. We cannot be at the same time both in one place and in another, because we have bodies; but God is Spirit. He can be everywhere at once. He is not limited by space or time.

We mentioned the sin and misery of the world. These facts raise problems which lead many to question whether God is almighty in any real sense of the word. How can we reconcile this belief with the disobedience of man? Some doctrines answer this by stressing the absolute power and majesty of God and meet the facts of sin by concluding that He has decided from the beginning who is to be saved and who is to be damned. Others infer that in the end all must be saved inevitably. The former err in allowing no freedom to

man. The latter allow no freedom to God also. They give man no freedom to choose and God no freedom to reject. We must find some other way of reconciling the almightiness of God with the fact of human disobedience.

Those who question the almightiness of God in the face of the misery of the world are not being perverse but are expressing an urgent need. If God is almighty why is His world in such disorder? So much that we see around us seems to make this belief impossible, however much we may desire to hold it. We must recognize that the facts of pain, suffering and evil offer a real challenge to the belief in God the Father Almighty. They present the dilemma: Has God willed these things or cannot He help them? Men argue that if God is almighty, He cannot be good, for a good God would not allow such things. But if He be good and loving, then for the same reason, how can He be almighty? This dilemma between the power and the love of God poses a hard problem. Yet faith refuses to accept the dilemma by saying that the Father is almighty; the Almighty is Father.

Before we can use the insight of faith to solve the problem presented by hard facts we must deal with a common misconception. It is natural for men to confuse happiness with comfort; to think that a loving Father must be chiefly concerned to make His children comfortable. This is a dangerous idea. History shows how the desire for comfort can sap the strength of nations and bring them to ruin. Personal experience shows that the truly happy man is not the one most concerned for his own comfort, but the one who is always ready to give it up for others and for greater ends. The fact that nations prosper by endurance and that men cannot be happy without discipline suggests that God never meant His world to be an easy place but one in which men have to work and serve. The major part of human suffering is caused, not by the demands which life makes upon us, but by the pride and selfishness of those who choose evil because they think it will serve their own ends.

Another common error is the tendency to define almightiness as omnipotence and then to identify it with caprice i.e., to think of the Almighty as One who is able to do whatever He wants at any given moment. But God is God and not the greatest of all maharajahas! A great element in the Biblical

1. Because of sin, a man gets suffering. God is Holy so he can not change. He can't do anything against His nature. Man has freedom of choice. He can trust God and get past through suffering.

account of the Father is His faithfulness. We worship Him not because He is powerful but because He is trustworthy. His almightiness is expressed not so much in occasional displays of power as in the constant and reliable ordering of the world. He could have made other kinds of world, but having made this world according to those constant principles which we call the Laws of Nature, God is pleased to keep His own law. There are things which God cannot do, not because they are impossible to Him, but because they are contrary to His faithfulness. He who is preserver of the order of the world which He has made cannot deny Himself. To argue that miracles challenge this is to have a wrong idea about miracles. God does work miracles, but they are not arbitrary events. They are consistent with the nature of the universe and are wrought through the over-riding of the secondary laws of material being by the higher laws of personal action. It can be argued that the conversion of the sinner is the greatest miracle of all.

The very faithfulness of God imposes a limitation on the use of His power. His purpose is to bring into being a community of free persons destined to live in fellowship with Him. To this end, when God made man, He gave him freedom. This freedom is real only so far as God so limits Himself as never to violate it. Every good human father knows what this means. If we are to bring up our children so as to be fit to live in the world, we have to give them increasing freedom as they grow up. This is not easy for us. Yet the parent who withholds freedom, whether through undue care or through tyranny, is hindering his children from becoming real persons.

It is certain that our Father in Heaven has given freedom of choice to His children. It is conditioned by many factors, but it is real. If freedom is to be real it must involve the possibility of choosing the wrong. God so respects man's freedom that He will not intervene to prevent either the choice of evil or the consequences. In a word, God made men to be persons not puppets. When He gave men the freedom necessary to grow into His likeness, He limited His almightiness and permitted the possibility of sin. He does not wish men to be sinners, but He wills that they have the freedom which enables them to become sinners if they use it to choose



the wrong. The gift of freedom is costly, both to the Giver and to those who receive it. Along this line we can understand how a world which has so much sin and misery can yet be the world of the Father Almighty. The evil in the world is bound up with the working out of God's purpose as Father; but because He is Almighty we can be certain that the evil will be overcome.

When we pray: Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, we are acknowledging that God's power is not yet fully in action. He wills goodness as the free response of man's will to His love; and He is willing to wait for this. He has made us able to co-operate in the fulfilment of His purpose. He does not force us to do this even though His rule is ineffective till we consent. It has been said that the army of God is composed of volunteers not conscripts. He will not have it otherwise even though victory in the holy war be delayed. The constitution which God has given to the world, and by which He rules, allows pain and suffering until men choose to obey. Therefore, the Christian may not pray that God will grant him immunity by suspending His rule, but that he may learn God's will and live by it.

It is true that the great evils in the world often tempt us to wonder whether this freedom is worth the cost. If the fulfilment of God's purpose costs so much suffering, would it not be better to live in a world in which freedom has no place? The very situation which prompts such a question offers its own answer. We are living amid a long-drawn conflict in which the value of personal freedom is the ultimate issue. Broadly speaking, the struggle is between the totalitarian and the democratic ways of life. There can be no doubt that the former seems the more efficient and prompt in action. There are many who welcome its restrictions on freedom because it relieves them of responsibility. Yet the latter, for all its weakness and hesitations, is far nearer the Christian ideal in that it treasures personal freedom and responsibility. Those who would maintain these, at any cost, know that it is better to die free than to exist as slaves.

We who share this view cannot criticise God when He tells us that there is no alternative. God, who wills to preserve the spiritual freedom of His children at any cost, must not be blamed if, having counted that cost, He Himself finds it

worth-while to pay the price of the suffering that His wilful children bring on themselves and on one another by choosing evil when they might have chosen good. Remember that God sent His Son to be crucified that He might bring many sons, in freedom, to glory. This is what God wants. His wisdom, love and power are ever directed to achieving this purpose. Again it is from the revelation in Christ that we learn the meaning of the Father's almightiness which includes both the Crucifixion of His Son, and the vindication of His method of rule when the Cross was transfigured by the Resurrection.

*Power*  
Those who are attracted by the idea of sheer omnipotence in God will find it not in Christianity but in Islam. The first Muslims established their doctrine of the unity of God at the edge of the sword and their religion spread by the principle that might is right. These facts contributed to their doctrine of God. The essence of Allah is power. This controls all other divine attributes and enables Allah to use them as he pleases. It sometimes seems that the divine omnipotence is even more important for the Muslim than the unity of God. Certainly it is a unity of power rather than of love. As the Prophet built the nation by power, so does God reveal Himself by the power of His omnipotent will. Thus the fatherhood of God in Islam is different from the Christian understanding of the term. Allah is called compassionate and merciful but love is not the dominant attribute. We hear more of punishment than of forgiveness. God forgives those who are ready to bend their wills to His; and bend they must. Allah is the very embodiment of arbitrary power. His divine will determines what is good and it is good simply because He wills it. His sovereignty is so absolute that no room is left for human freedom. He has fastened each man's fate as a rope round the neck. Before him the worshipper bows down with the sense of utter creatureliness and nothingness.

The Gospel, which gives so different a meaning to almightiness and even confesses that God has limited Himself for the sake of His children, does not suggest that God is not Himself free. He is free to decide how and when and where to use His power. He who is the same yesterday, today and for ever is free even to change His mind. This paradox makes sense when we remember that there are two kinds of unchangeableness. Things are unchangeable in the sense that

they remain always as they were at the beginning. Persons, however, who are alive and active, do many different things and wear many different aspects. We call them unchangeable if all these are consistent; have the same general purpose; belong to the same character. What is true of human persons is no less true of God.

There are some who hesitate to call God unchangeable because the word suggests, and in some contexts means, a cold rigid Being, far removed from the uninterested in the changes and chances of our life. They prefer to speak of a 'progressive' God; One who gradually comes to be Himself within His creation. Such a God is hardly One on whom we can be sure we can rely. How can we know what point He has reached? Can we pray to such a God with any confidence? It is a great thing to know that amid all the changes of life, God remains the constant Lord. The Father is always the same, not as Brahman is, but in the sense that His love never alters; His truth is steadfast; His patience does not waver. His power is ceaselessly at work in the creation and redemption of the world. He is changeless in the sense that whatever He does, He is always Himself. He does what He does in the character of the Father whose sole purpose is to save His erring children. He is always the Saviour, but He has many ways of saving. He is always ready to change His methods to meet every need of man.

N. H. Snaith, to whom I owe much of what has been written above, rightly says that the great point to stress in his context is that God is *Almighty to save*. This is the Christian meaning of the divine omnipotence. The Father is not a fixed immovable perfection, but active and able to redeem those whom He has made. He meets their needs with the saving power which is all-sufficient and wholly adequate. He can do everything that is not self-contradictory, or inconsistent with His nature of love and His purpose to save. We can be certain that all that is consistent with these can and will be realized.

Our argument suggests that it is better to think of the Almighty as the *All-ruling* than as the Omnipotent. As used of the Father, the word does not mean the mere ability to do anything, but the active exercise of the power of rule in the world. To this power there are no limits but those which

God Himself has chosen to set to the exercise of His power. When we call the Father Almighty we confess our faith that He so rules the world that in the end His Love must triumph. He is no mere spectator, watching the struggles of His children from outside, sending an occasional and miraculous helping hand. We 'sing the almighty power of God' as men who believe in Him who came to declare that God is not outside His world but in it, Himself sharing our keenest woes and bearing the hardest part, to the end that all may be saved from sin and death and brought into eternal life.

In the end, it is the Cross which determines the meaning which we give to *Almighty*. It is the manner of men to think of the omnipotence of power, but at the Cross God points us to the almightiness of love. Love is very patient and very kind. It is content to go to the long way round; to endure many rebuffs and reverses; to suffer much frustration of its purposes. But it never lets go and it never fails. In this fallen world, the purposes of God are beset by many denials and hindered by many defeats. In all these afflictions He is afflicted, for it is the Father's will that the triumph of His purposes can be achieved neither by Him without us, nor by us without Him. However far away and dimly perceived be the consummation, our confidence is sure that it cannot ultimately fail. There is nothing so almighty as love, and nothing over which love cannot in the end prevail.

W. A. Brown: *God at Work*.

A. A. David: *The Activity of God*.

G. Aulen: *Christus Victor*.

## 5. CREATOR

The Christian doctrine of God does not depend on our arguments but it can be expounded and defended by reason. The human mind cannot comprehend God but it can know all that is necessary for salvation. What we know about God, moreover, enables us to make sense of all the facts. This is what we mean when we say that the Christian Faith is reasonable. This is particularly true in regard to the doctrine of creation. It seems to us both true and reasonable that 'in the beginning God created.....' Yet many intelligent and religious men cannot believe this and reject the doctrine of

*According to science our cell came and it developed.  
(But problem arose, how lifeless cell became life (man)  
was from lifeless situation cell came and developed?)*

## GOD THE FATHER

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*Creation out of nothing*  
creation. It cannot, indeed, be proved from evidence. No witnesses were present when God made the world out of nothing. No argument leads to this as a necessary conclusion. We accept the doctrine as it is revealed in the Bible e.g., Gen. 1:1-2:24; Isa. 40-66 N.B. 40:12 ff.; 45:18 ff.; Job 38-41; Ps. 8; 104; John 1:1ff.; Col. 1:9ff. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, Heb. 11:3. He created the universe out of nothing and everything depends on Him. We can then go on to show that this belief is the most reasonable explanation of all the facts and that no alternative is satisfactory.

We maintain, against all alternatives, that everything has its origin in the creative will of God. He does not use material previously existing outside Himself. The finite world does not simply flow from the infinite like light from a lamp. In the beginning is God; He is the Maker of all that exists. This is a religious assertion. It is not speculation about the nature of creation, nor research into its processes. Discussions about a first cause; question such as Who made God? are irrelevant. We can agree that the philosophic enquiry into the relation of time and eternity is important, and that science has much to say as to the methods of God's working. But our concern is to know what is God's relation to His world; what are His purposes for us; what it means to say that in the beginning He created all things.

The theological doctrine of creation and the scientific account of origins are not necessarily inconsistent, but they are different. The scientist deals with facts, tracing them to their origin in order to show *how* they have come to be what they are. For information here we consult books of science and not the Bible. The theologian is concerned to know the purpose and value of things; *why* they have come to be what they are. He looks to the beginning because he wants to know the end. He goes to the Bible to learn about the meaning and purpose of life. We read that God saw everything that He had made and it was very good. We believe that this is why He created it. Divine origin and divine value go together. We are certain that God made us because we believe that He made us for Himself. The doctrine of creation takes us beyond the processes of the world to the divine purpose which is at its beginning and which directs

*God has a purpose and will.*

*Q:- Creation out of nothing, explain?*

*Answer - page 161 - Ex-nihilo-creation (out of nothing)  
it is how purpose will to create the world*

it to the end. It is interesting to learn through science how things have happened; the main concern is to know why. We name God Creator because the purpose is His.

We confess that our Father is Maker of Heaven and earth; that He is both above all His works and in them; that He loves, sustains and guides the course of all that He has made. There are no arguments to prove this faith, but if we take the Biblical account as a working hypothesis we find nothing in it contrary to reason and experience. We go on to consider alternative explanations of the existence of the universe e.g., the materialist doctrine that matter is the prior reality out of which mind and spirit grow; the view that the universe is eternal in its own right; the belief that the material world originates in an evil spirit eternally opposed to God. We see that each alternative conflicts, in one way or another, with reason and experience. This confirms our belief that the simple and comprehensive account in the Bible is the best, indeed the only, hypothesis. The process of eliminating alternative theories which do not explain all the facts serves to stress the validity of the one which does. The Bible doctrine of creation covers all the facts and offers a coherent explanation of them. It declares that spirit is prior to matter; that the material world is to be understood in relation to the spiritual; that the world is the scene of a spiritual purpose. Behind all things lies the holy loving will of the Father who brought them into being. No other account offers serious challenge to this truth.

Are the eternal spiritual world and the visible world of time and space both real? If both are real, what is the relation between them? These are fundamental questions of religion. Many hold the spiritual world to be the only reality, and the world of change and decay to be either a fall from true being or illusion. They cannot believe that God created a real world of persons, things and events. This view has gained strength in reaction against the current widespread opinion that only the temporal world is real. If God is Spirit, what has He to do with the world of matter? If He be the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity what has He to do with events and animals and men?

Hinduism answers these questions not by some alternative doctrine of creation but by denying that there is such a

*from the mouth of Brahma, Vishnu came out  
Vaishya from stomach and Shudras came*  
Vedanta Creation GOD THE FATHER out from Pg 163

doctrine. <sup>1</sup> Creation is no problem to the Hindu for he regards spirit as the only reality and disposes of the visible material world as *maya*. The fact that this doctrine has been held for so long and by so many suggests that it has some value. P. D. Devanandan has shown in how attractive a form it is being presented today. Yet, as Bishop Neill points out, it cannot be maintained without striking at the foundation of all thought. He cites the old proposition: there is nothing in the mind which was not first in the senses. This is sound. All our thoughts derive from what we feel, see, hear, touch. But if all that we perceive is *maya*, what reason have we to suppose that any greater reality attaches to our spiritual conceptions? When we deny the reality of the material we cut away the only foundation on which to establish the reality of the spiritual.

Over against the Hindu denial, with its inherent self-contradiction, that God created a real world, the Bible declares that He did this very thing. The created world is intended; it is not just a distorted and distorting view of eternity. When it is said that 'the most High has made not one world but two', 2 Esdras 7:50; and the Creed asserts that God is Maker of Heaven and earth, problems are offered to the mind, but faith is proclaimed in the Living God who is at once eternal and concerned with the events of time. To call God Creator is to name Him the One on whom all other existences depend. The ground of creation is not in itself but in Him. Creation happens in time and God is active in all its processes; but God and His works are not in time. They have eternal significance. Doctrines which make the things of time meaningless imply the denial that God is ultimate Being and Supreme Spirit no less than those which find the meaning apart from Him.

Dr Brunner expressed the conviction, after his visit to India, that the Biblical doctrine of creation is the most important single issue in the preaching of the Gospel to Hindus. We must bear this in mind as we draw the implications of the doctrine. An important point to stress is that we speak of God and His world. He is neither separate from, nor identified with, what He has made. He does not come into being along with the world or emerge within it. He is always above the world and is not limited by anything outside Himself.

*Modern science opposed the Creation doctrine of  
Buddhism and also denies the Biblical doctrine  
of creation but they believe in evolution.*



The Bible rules out any suggestion that God is a mere life force, or in any sense one with the universe. He is Sovereign Lord of the world which He has made. The doctrine excludes any form of Pantheism. We believe that the goal of creation is that God shall be all in all, but we do not infer from this that creation will be merged in God, or that personal and moral distinctions are unreal; mere appearances which are ultimately lost in the absolute. We believe that the infinite and eternal God has brought this world of time and space into real being; that He controls it for good purposes; and that it has its fulfilment in perfect obedience to His will.

We have already noted the gulf between the Christian doctrine of God and that which regards the Supreme Spirit as the absolute being without qualities and beyond human understanding. The distinction is even clearer in the light of the Biblical doctrine of creation. The world is neither a mere bubble thrown off by God in sport nor something without relation to the divine purpose, from which to escape. It is the Father's handwork, and however men may have sought to obstruct Him, He still has a gracious purpose for it which neither folly nor sin can defeat. There are many difficulties in the doctrine but life is without meaning unless we know that we live in a world which God has made, which He still controls, and in which we have work to do.

The creation stories in Genesis reflect beliefs held by all the early Semites. As the Hebrew faith grew in response to the divine revelation through the Prophets, the doctrine of creation was deepened and enlarged. The Prophets, who learned the nature of God in terms of His purpose for mankind, came to see that creation was bound up with that purpose and could be understood only by those to whom it had been revealed. When Isaiah spoke of God's care for men and His plans for their future, he spoke as one believing in a God whose purpose went back to creation, when he made the world apt for the fulfilment of His purpose, Isa. 45, cf. 40:28ff.; Ps.29:3ff.

The Christian Church inherited this Old Testament teaching and stressed the relation of the fulfilment of the divine purpose to creation e.g., Rev. 4:11. It is significant that the influx of Gentile converts made it necessary to strengthen the summary of the Biblical doctrine in the Creed by adding:

*Love, holiness and justice are one, how does it work out?*

and of all things visible and invisible. The Church was not seeking to supplement the Biblical teaching by an account of how God created Heaven and earth. It recognized that some freedom of interpretation was permissible and it did not rule out the idea that the creative activity of God is continuous. The point was to exclude the heresy, creeping into the Church from oriental sources, that matter is evil and without ultimate value. The additional clause in the Nicene Creed underlines the Biblical protest against any suggestion that the material world is evil or unreal. It endorses the belief that the spiritual and the material world is *all* the work of God. The whole universe is His creation and exists, with all its resources and possibilities, for good purposes.

When we call God Creator, therefore, we acknowledge Him to be the one supreme cause and sustainer of all existence. We go further. Human thought can reach such an idea but, apart from the revelation in Christ, there is no sure evidence of the character of the cause. The Gospel declares that the creative purpose is loving because it is the Father's will. All the divine qualities which we have ascribed to the Father belong to Him as Creator.

(i) The Creator is holy. Between Him and His creatures there is that difference which compels awe and reverence. The sense of the divine holiness in the Old Testament, e.g., Isa. 6; 40 and the Psalter, is reaffirmed in the New Testament where *Our Father* is followed by *Hallowed be Thy Name*. The whole Biblical contrast between Creator and creatures stresses that He is God and we are His People and the work of His hands. There is value in the idea that we may consider the meaning of creation by analogy with the experience skill and enjoyment of the artist or craftsman. Yet we may never forget that what we call 'creative' genius in men is as different from God's power as is our wisdom from His. In the deepest sense, the creature, however great his genius, cannot create; he can only use the materials and skill which God gives him to copy or adapt. True creation is the work of God alone. He alone can bring into being that which is, out of that which is not. It pleases Him to use His creatures as the instruments of His purpose. The recollection of the holiness of God points to the fact that creation is a mystery and that the proper relation of creature to Creator is that of worship. Cf. Job 38; Acts 17:24ff.; Rom. 1:18 ff.; 4:17.

(ii) The work of creation is the expression of the love of God. God who was moved by love to make the world does not forget and is not indifferent to what He has made. In creation, man has a special place. God values all the things He has made but the ultimate purpose of creation concerns persons. The Creator is the Father to whom His children matter most. The high place given to man in the Old Testament, Gen. 2; Ps. 8, is confirmed by Jesus' assurance of God's care for him, Matt. 6:28 ff.; 10:29 ff. The New Testament stresses the relation of salvation to creation, Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2. The love of God revealed in Jesus is as old as creation, Gen. 1:2 ff.; 2 Cor. 4:6. The man who has responded to the love of God in Christ is a new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17. The same love is the motive of creation and re-creation, Rom. 5:12 ff.

(iii) Creation manifests the power of God. That which can make and uphold the world is the almighty power which only God possesses. The creative power of God is not different from His holy love. He who has power to make the world so loves it as to send His Son to re-make it. Jesus Himself pointed out that the healing and forgiveness of man call for the same power of God as 'made the mountains rise', Mark 2:9. It is certain that the divine power which was at the beginning will continue to the end, Eph. 1:3 ff.

In the light of the re-creating work of God in Christ we know that creation is not simply an act in the far distant past. The world which came into being when, in the beginning, God created, continues under His hand and depends on Him for what shall be. God has not been idle after His first week's work. He is always at work to maintain and redeem what He has made. The holy love and power which brought the world into being are ever present to enable its continuance and to guarantee the future, Ps. 95:4 ff.; 104:5 ff.; 107:4 ff. God does not bring a world into being and then leave it to go its own way.

Jesus confirmed the belief that creation is more than an act of the past when He ascribed the error of the Jews regarding the Sabbath to the misunderstanding of Gen. 2:2; and when He declared His own work to be the expression of the continuing work of the Father, Mark 2:27 f.; John 5:17 ff. For Him the creation story is not only the origin but also

the pattern of history. What God did at the beginning, He is always doing. The same is true of the future, for God will continue what He began until His purpose is fulfilled, Ps. 138:8; 1 Pet. 4:19. Creation moves to its divine fulfilment; it is expectant because the God who made it works in it, Rom. 8:18 ff. The belief that God is Creator is the surest ground of confidence for the future. God will not forsake the world which He has made, or leave it to itself, or to chance, or to fate. He who acted in creation and in the Incarnation, promises, concerning the future: I make all things new, Rev. 21:5.

- H. H. Farmer: *God and the World.*  
 J. S. Hendry: *God the Creator.*  
 E. Brunner: *The Doctrine of Creation.*  
 P D. Devanandan: *The Doctrine of Maya.*  
 D. L. Sayers: *The Mind of the Maker.*

## 6. GOD IS SPIRIT

The Christian doctrine of God has been criticised as making God in the image of man in that Father, Almighty, Creator suggest activities of man. Unless we are to join the Hindu and say *neti neti* we cannot but use human terms when we speak of God. But we use them in the way God allows. We know that men are fathers, that many are mighty men, and are in some sense makers. Theology, however, does not simply write these words in capitals or produce them to the n'th power when it speaks about God. That would lead, not to God, but to some imaginary superman. We begin our thinking about God believing that our being depends on His and that He has revealed to us who He is. Theology, like the Bible, begins with the declaration of faith: in the beginning, God.

There is, therefore, no problem in affirming of God the highest human qualities, and using of Him the greatest words we have, so long as we remember that there are in us only hints of the one perfect Being from whom we come, in whom we live, to whom we go, and before whom we worship. It is not that our fatherhood, power and skill are the standard by which we assess God, but that these qualities in us point to Him from whom they come and in whom alone their true

meaning is found. Far from making God in man's image, the Christian believes that he has been made in God's image Cf. Vol. II, Chapter 1.

The Biblical doctrine of the personal and transcendent God, whose character is holy love, is the outcome and expression of long experience of His dealings with men. This is not human discovery but divine revelation. The testimony on which we rely is that of the Spirit of God, not the mind of man. The Biblical revelation confirms and enlarges that which is already present to our spirit. It is as creatures made in the image of God that we acknowledge its truth. Nevertheless our understanding of the truth of God is imperfect. There are many questions we cannot answer. Finite creatures can never fully grasp the infinite Being of their Creator. There is in Christian theology a reverent agnosticism which says: Let God be God.

This does not lead, however, to the Hindu concept of sheer impersonal Being. The God of the Bible is One who wills, acts, loves. The idea of divine personality is an essential element in the Christian doctrine of God. It is bound up with the belief in God as One who reveals Himself. This is not an easy or self-evident doctrine. The history of man's thought about God shows how difficult it is to have a firm hold on the truth that God is personal. Primitive polytheism and the philosophical monism to which, as in India, it may lead, both draw back from the idea.

This is an issue of the greatest importance. We see that, even with Hinduism, there are many who recognize that much depends on man being able to enter into a relation with God analogous to his relations with his fellow-men rather than with things. Much of the value of life would go if we surrendered the conviction that God knows and cares for the individual. It seems to us to be a religious necessity to think of God as One who fulfils His purposes. But an impersonal Being cannot love or will. Above all, the central doctrine of the Incarnation is bound up with the personality of God in that it declares that the supreme revelation of God has been given in the person of Him in whom we see the express Image of the Father.

We acknowledge that those who deny that God is best represented as a person do so in the belief that personality,

however highly interpreted, involves limitations which cannot be applicable to the Supreme. This belief is not confined to the Hindus. Huxley speaks for many when he says: 'A person has passions and caprices; and it is natural that he should do odd things—clamour for the hearts of sacrificial victims, demand the persecution of the Jews, threaten destruction to whole cities.....' Mackenzie comments that 'if this be the essence of personality none would be proud to possess it, but this is to take personality not in its essential characteristics but in its lowest manifestations. There are criminals and lunatics in the world but we do not regard them as ideal or representative persons. In integrated personalities we have the crown of creation, and I think it may be claimed that the most completely integrated personalities are those which are indwelt by the Spirit of God'. Hence the Christian, while agreeing with all who say that God is Spirit and that Spirit is supreme, cannot proceed, on this basis, to de-personalize God.

The advaitin, zealous not to limit God by defining Him, refuses to think of Him as personal and maintains that the impersonal is the higher category. From him comes the sharpest criticism that Christians make God in the image of man. We answer that the belief in God as Father is wholly consistent with belief in the Supremacy of Spirit. When we call God Spirit we do not simply mean that He is not matter. We regard it as of the essence of a spiritual being that he has powers of thought, affection and purpose. The Biblical stress on God as loving and active means that He is the One who manifests, in His divine measure, the essential powers of Spirit. In Christian Theology it is *as Spirit* that God is personal for we know Him as One who is, and does, and promises.

Most men have a vague idea what personality means but it is not easy to find an exact definition. Like all the really important things in life it is too big to be contained in a formula. Personality, as we know it through our own experience and our relations with others, involves unity and freedom. The person is an individual who is self-conscious and able to direct his actions to an end. Here is a quality which is not found in things and animals. Man, as a person, can know himself and can pass judgment on his deeds and

character. He can direct his thought and actions towards some purpose which he chooses. Moreover as a person, man is morally responsible. He can be expected to act in accordance with principles and is judged for what he does. The fact that we are all imperfect in these respects is not inherent in personality but is a limitation of it.

We do not find personality below man, in the scale of being, but that is no reason why we should deny that it exists above man. The revelation in the Bible declares the one living God to be the supreme personal reality with whom we have to do. We cannot think that the Creator, in whose image we are made, is less than His creatures. The use of the term need not limit God. It is not wholly adequate, but we have no better. It is good as far as it goes but it does not say all that God is. He may be more than a person; He is certainly not less for He meets us in the character of the great Planner and Doer of redeeming deeds.

The most personal of all our words for God is that which we know to be nearest the mind of Christ—Father. This illustrates both the limits and the values of the idea of divine personality. We do not make God in our image when we name Him Father. On the contrary He is the Father from whom every fatherhood is named. Neither our Fatherhood nor our personality is the measure of His, but His is the measure of ours. In Him are none of the blemishes which mar us. He is the Father in Heaven whose name is hallowed. We do not address Him thus to satisfy a desire to define God for our own purposes, but because we have learned, from Him, that there is no better name.

We believe that all the true values of life come from God and that through them we can learn something about God. So, in that personality is the highest form of being known to us, we think most adequately of God when we think of Him as personal Spirit. We do not limit the divine personality to that which we know in ourselves. The human spirit is the best analogy we have but it is imperfect. At the best it gives the reflection of the divine, but never the pattern. Some would stress this point by saying that God is superpersonal. It is better to say that He alone is perfectly personal. The values of personal life have their fulness only in Him. As they grow in us, we grow in His likeness. Our personal



language is not adequate to express God but, so far as it goes it is not false, cf. Barth: 'God is personal, but personal in an incomprehensible way, in so far as the conception of His personality surpasses all our views of personality. This is so because He and He alone is a true, real and genuine person. Were we to overlook this and try to conceive God in our own strength according to our conceptions of personality we should make an idol out of God'.

A fundamental element in personality is the will. When a person wills, moreover, it is in relation to other persons. We shall see, in the next chapter, that the existence of 'the other' in respect of the will of God is bound up with the eternal 'threeness' of His personality. Yet even before we come to the doctrine of the Trinity, our understanding of creation tells us something about what God act upon, *in time*, in order to fulfil His purpose. We believe that the sphere in which God does this is the world which He has made, and which is not identical with Him. The world came into being by God and depends upon Him but He has given to it sufficient independence to be 'other' to His will. Thus the doctrines of creation and of the divine personality belong together. This fact, together with the belief that man is the crown of creation and the special object of God's purpose, leads, as Bishop Neill has stressed, to some important conclusions.

If this world owes its being to the personal Spirit, we should expect to find it rational and reliable. This we do find. There is no truth in the idea that nature as such is without order but that the human mind invents an order and imposes it upon nature. Were this the case, each man would impose his own order. But, in fact, we find that the proven results of logical and scientific investigations are valid everywhere. This supports our belief that the material world is an object of rational study by reasonable men.

Further, and more important still, if the world is the creation of a personal God we should expect it to be a suitable home for persons. This is so, in spite of many appearances to the contrary. The world is a place of disaster and conflict but even more it is arena in which spirit is increasingly overcoming matter. It is, as has been said, 'the vale of soul-making'. In the interaction of spirit and matter, personal qualities are forged. The great personal virtues of courage,

patience, compassion etc., which we see to be ends in themselves are the things which abide. They do not come by chance. They are the products of the divine ordering of the world as the place in which men become persons.

This line of thought points to the fact that the world has a spiritual goal. In such we should expect to find signs of an increasing purpose. These we do find, especially when we take the revelation in Christ as the clue to the understanding of history. In the light of Christ we can see the world as amenable to the highest personal purposes. It is not so automatically. Much time, labour and co-operation is needed for their fulfilment. Those, however, who look at history in the light of the Cross can see, behind these tortured years, a single purpose of good in which all persons have a part.

Lastly, if the final reality of the world is spiritual, we should expect to find that change and decay, so apparent here and now, are not the last word. As persons, men live, here and now, in the material world but their true life is distinct from, and not wholly dependent on, life in this world. Even while the body is subject to the conditions of time and space, the mind can soar above them. We believe in an eternal world where death is no more, and of which we have, in Christ, the foretaste here. As Christians, we interpret this present life in terms of the life to come, cf. Vol. II, Chapter 6.

We have stressed the importance of the doctrine of creation for the preaching of the Gospel in India. We must not forget that the essence of the doctrine is not that God gave the world its beginning once, but that it owes its continued existence to the working of His will. He did not make the world and then leave it to itself. He ever acts in and over it. Thus, Christian doctrine has nothing to do with any idea which separates God from His world. It does not, however, swing to the other extreme which identifies God with the world. The former is characteristic of Islam; the latter of Hinduism. Christianity acknowledges the immanence of God and interprets it in terms of the activity of the transcendent and personal God. He works, as persons do, in many and various ways, all of which show constancy of character in the face of varied situations.

The Christian doctrine of the divine indwelling has nothing in common with any form of Pantheism which begins

with the idea that God is in the world as the life of a plant is in the plant and leads to results which are indistinguishable from materialism. The advaitin, in the interests of pure spirituality, refuses to ascribe personality to God on the ground that the Supreme Spirit cannot be self-conscious and self-directing. We may ask whether he understands the meaning of personality. When he argues that his spiritual monism includes all within its scope but that faith in a personal God with its 'I and Thou' relationship is divisive, is he not confusing individual with personal? It is significant that the theology of the impersonal Supreme Spirit is bound up with the divisive system of caste and thinks of salvation mainly in terms of individual release, whereas that which understands Spirit in personal terms is embodied in the saved and saving society sent out to seek and gather in the lost.

It is important to distinguish between *individual* and *person*. The growing recognition of this in recent years has led to a greater stress on personality in man's thinking about spiritual reality. This is of some consequence in an age when an undue proportion of thought and energy is being given to scientific and technical affairs. Eddington has written:

It is, I think, of the very essence of the unseen world that the conception of personality should dominate it. Force, energy, dimensions belong to the world of symbols, it is out of such conceptions that we have built up the external order of physics. What other conceptions have we? After exhausting physical methods we returned to the inmost recesses of consciousness, to the voice that proclaims our personality; and from there we entered on a new outlook. We have to build the spiritual world out of symbols taken from our own personality, as we build the scientific world out of the symbols of the mathematician. I think therefore we are not wrong in embodying the significance of the spiritual world to ourselves in the feeling of a personal relationship, for our whole approach to it is bound up with those aspects of consciousness which personality is centred.

This word from one who was a great scientist and a great Christian, and for whom the fulness of personality is in God alone, leads us fittingly to the conclusion of this chapter. We

know nothing more important in life than personal relations. Even those with human friends can teach us that the closer we are to them, and the more we give ourselves to them, the richer is our own personality. This fact gives added force to our argument that the concept of personality is of primary importance in the Christian doctrine of God. The relation of the human spirit to the divine is the most personal of all. It is in the 'I and Thou' relationship that God discloses who He is—the supreme Person with whom we have to do, and in meeting whom our own personality has growing significance and value.

C. C. J. Webb: *God and Personality*.

A. S. Eddington: *Science and the Unseen World*.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HOLY TRINITY

THE Christian says: I believe in one God. The Jew and the Muslim say: You worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; you believe in three gods. We meet this challenge by the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: God in three Persons, blessed Trinity. It is important, at the outset, to see that this doctrine is not so much a problem in itself, as the answer to the problems raised by the Christian facts. In it is summed up God's revelation of Himself. It is not an easy doctrine but we cannot do without it if we are to be truly Christian in our thinking about God, Eph. 2:18; 1 John 5:5 ff.

There are many Christians who are quite prepared to do without it. Those who are not interested in theology become most impatient when the Trinity is mentioned. It seems to them that the theologians are distorting the simple Gospel into a formula which makes nonsense. Yet there is no other way to do justice to the facts of Scripture and the experience of the Church. The early theologians were not splitting hairs but seeking the basis for the experience of the ordinary believer when, using the best available words of their day, they affirmed within the unity of the divine Being three Persons who can be *distinguished* but not *separated*.

The matter can be put to the test very easily. How are we to understand such verses as Matt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14 unless we interpret them in some such terms? Read again Matt. 3:16f.; Luke 10:21ff.; John 14:1ff.; 15:26; Acts 2:32ff.; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:4ff.; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:14ff.; 4:4ff.; 1 Pet. 1:2. These declare or imply that the Father is God; Jesus Christ is God; the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there is one God not three. Therefore we speak of the Holy Trinity: One God in three Persons; three Persons in one God. The point I want to make at the beginning, and to develop in what follows, is that this doctrine alone meets the facts of Scripture and the religious needs of the believer.

The outline of the doctrine given here may be supplemented by the fuller treatment in another volume of this series *The Doctrine*

of the Trinity by P. de D. May. There is a good simple account by H. Roberts in the *Headingley Lectures on the Holy Spirit* 107 ff. The article by H. M. Scott in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* is fuller and more advanced. I have found L. Hodgson: *The Doctrine of the Trinity* clear and unambiguous. It shows how the doctrine alone does justice to God's revelation of Himself and that it is philosophically sound. It is especially good in its account of the divine oneness. See also his smaller book, *How can God be both One and Three?* R. P. C. Hanson: *God: Creator, Saviour, Spirit*.

## 1. THE RELEVANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

In his book *Doctrine and Evangelism*, concerned with the relation of Christian thinking to Christian witness, Dr. Vincent Taylor claims that the doctrine of the Trinity is the only doctrine which gives unity to Christian teaching and experience. 'It gives us,' he adds, 'a rich and virile doctrine of God, pulsing with life and power, and providing room for all the blessings which come to us in the fellowship of the Church'. This stresses the fact that the doctrine is Biblical, and that it is bound up with the practice and the piety of the Christian religion. We may proceed by considering briefly the three points here implied before going on to discuss in fuller detail the Scriptural basis, the historical definition and some of the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity.

(i) We can best establish the *Biblical authority* of the doctrine by recapitulating what we have already learned. We have stressed all along that the revelation in Christ through the Spirit has determining significance for our thought concerning God. At the end of Chapter I we concluded a summary statement of the Christian doctrine of God. This we have sought to expound and justify in the intervening chapters.

We considered the story of Jesus in the days of His flesh and saw that, even then, there was a growing belief in His unique relation to God as the Son e.g., Mark 1:10f.; 2:5ff.; 3:11; 4:41; 9:7. This was confirmed and deepened by the Resurrection and Ascension. That He so believed concerning Himself is clear e.g., Matt. 11:27; Mark 12:6, 35 ff.; 13:32; 14:61f. We have seen how, as the first Christians sought to understand, and witness to, the new experience of God in Christ, they were compelled to relate Him more and more closely to God until they could only say: Jesus is Lord,

John 1:1ff.; 8:42, 58; 10:15, 30; 14:11; 20:28, Rom.1:4; 9:5; 2 Cor. 5:19; 8:9; Phil. 2:5ff.; Col. 1:15ff.; 2:9; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:1ff.; Rev. 5:13. But the Lord Jesus was never simply identified with the Father. All that is said about the pre-existence of the Son and the heavenly High Priesthood of the ascended Christ implies that there is an eternal distinction in the Godhead.

Regarding the Holy Spirit we saw that the early Church believed that the Spirit of the Lord belonged to all believers in Christ and that there is a relation between the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit. It was soon seen that these beliefs created a problem for monotheism and there were attempts to solve it e.g., Acts 5:31 f.; 11:16 f.; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20 f.; Rev. 1:4 ff. Matt. 28:19 makes it clear that by 80 A.D. at least, the Jewish Christians had a trinitarian formula and held it consistent with Jesus' teaching and with belief that God is One.

We saw how Paul seems to identify the indwelling Christ with the Holy Spirit and yet distinguishes them. He teaches that God and the Spirit are one and yet refuses to identify the Spirit with the Father. 1 Cor. 2:10 f.; 15:24; Gal. 4:6. He speaks of the Spirit praying with men, Rom. 8:26 f.

We can sum up our Biblical evidence by saying that the account of the Christian experience of God given in Paul, Rom. 5:1 ff.; 8; 15:15 f.; 1 Cor. 2:2 ff.; 12:4ff.; 2 Cor., 13:14; Gal. 4:3ff.; Eph. 2:18; 3:14ff.; 4:4ff.; 5:18ff. and in John 14-16 cf. 1 John 3:12 ff.; 4:12 ff.; 5:6 ff., contains statements that can make sense only in the doctrine that God is both one and three. It all leads up to, and is bound up with, the belief that the One God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For those who believe in God in Christ through the Spirit, the Biblical doctrine of God means the Trinity. It is just because this doctrine guards all the truth about God declared in the Bible that the Church, in the face of many difficulties, has ever held fast to it. Without this doctrine we cannot have the truth; it is the only way by which to give form and coherence to the total teaching of the Bible.

(ii) Enough has been said already to suggest that, contrary to common opinion, we are here concerned with what is *practical*. One of the clearest lessons of Church History is that Christians who resent or ignore the doctrine of the



Trinity soon lose hold on Christ and the Holy Spirit, and do not really know God as Father. 'I do not see', said John Wesley, 'how it is possible for anyone to have vital religion who denies that the three are one'. Many illustrations, from the first century onwards, could be cited. Let one recent example from the Church in India suffice.

I have a friend who has wide experience both as a teacher of theology and as a district evangelist. He has been working in an area where the Christians suffer from a general spiritual torpor and are in urgent need of revival. With a view to meeting the need he made a survey of the inner life of the Church. He found the problem to be at heart a theological problem. All admitted, in theory, the three-fold revelation of God as Father, Son and Spirit. Deeper analysis of their beliefs, however, showed that in their heart religion, and in practical expression of it, most of them were unitarian. God was *either* Father *or* Son *or* Spirit. Some acknowledged God to be Father, benevolent but unpredictable, and the fact that they prayed 'Jesus Baba' showed that to call Jesus 'God' meant nothing distinctive. Others, usually after revivalist preaching, put their trust in Jesus as Saviour, but in such a way that He simply took the place of the Father in their devotion. Others, again, seeking the Baptism of the Spirit, but forgetting the way they had come, expected from God the Holy Spirit an experience of emotional exaltation and lost themselves in a one-sided 'pentecostalism'. In short behind a merely verbal orthodoxy, the religious temper was, in one way or another, unitarian and its practical effects negligible.

The conclusion is that a Church which has ceased to believe effectively in the triune God has little hope of survival. The essential feature necessary for the permanent effectiveness of a revival is that it be firmly grounded in trinitarian theology. If this be lacking the people slip from one enthusiasm to another but nothing of lasting value is conserved. So too in the on-going life of the Church, the people need to be helped to a fully-balanced knowledge of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. Every act of worship should include in prayer and praise an expression of the trinitarian faith. Christians hold, and must hold, the doctrine because it alone contains and safeguards all that they have learned to be true of God

—at once the Creator transcendent over the world; incarnate and living on earth; indwelling in the world.

(iii) 'I not only believe in the Trinity in Unity but I find in it the centre of all my beliefs, the rest of my spirit'. This word of F.D Maurice is characteristic of the Christian witness down the ages and in all lands, to the *devotional* aspect of the doctrine. It is significant that the greatest hymn of praise in Christendom is the ancient *Te Deum*, and one of the most loved and used modern hymns in all lands is Heber's *Holy Holy Holy*. Both are trinitarian hymns. This fact points to the real and deep appeal of the doctrine. I note that Hodgson concludes a solid piece of theological argument by quoting Mansbridge: 'This is the Christian faith revealed to me by those who have borne witness to it, and responded to by me in the power of my own spirit. It is mysterious, but the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity of God meets the need of human nature—God above, God incarnate, God inspiring. The whole being vibrates to its truth. Those who accept, or who are proceeding to the acceptance of its truth, are in the blessed company of all faithful people'. For further study of this important aspect I recommend C. W. Lowry: *The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Life of Devotion*.

What has been said justifies the conclusion that the Trinity is the one finally distinctive feature of Christian Theology. In this doctrine the Christian account of the Word *God* is completed and summed up as, for example, in the *First Article of Religion* in the *Book of Common Prayer*:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting,...of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things.....And in the unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This 'article' is not only first but central and all-comprehending. It gathers together all that we have learned concerning God. The fundamental truth of the whole Bible is that God is Creator, the sovereign, righteous, holy Lord over all that He has made. We know, moreover, that He who reigns over the world is concerned in it because He sent His Son to become man and dwell among us. The Incarnation enables us

to believe that we all matter to God because Christ died for us. Again, we know that it is the constant work of God the Holy Spirit to give to us, and keep us in, that life which God has made possible through His Son. Of this knowledge we need every element, and all at once. The doctrine of the Trinity meets this need.

## 2. THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

We may now proceed to establish in some detail the position summarily stated above. We said that the doctrine is built upon the facts of Scripture. From this we shall not depart. But we must recognize that it is not a Biblical doctrine in the sense that we can prove it by quoting a few texts. Matt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14 imply the doctrine but they do not state it. Nowhere in the Bible, or indeed in the Creeds, is it explicitly set out as a doctrine in such terms as those of the article quoted above. As there set out, however, it gathers together and expresses, as nothing else does, the total revelation of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, recorded in the Bible. So we say that the doctrine of the Trinity has a wholly Scriptural basis.

In olden days, theologians used to begin their account of the Biblical foundation by quoting certain Old Testament passages which seemed to them to be trinitarian e.g., the three-fold *Holy* of Isa. 6:3; the use of *us* in Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8; and the plural form of the Hebrew word for God. Such a method of exegesis is impossible today. Yet if we believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is the truth about God, we can expect to find some intimations of it even before Christ. In fact we do find in all monotheistic religions a sense, in varying degrees, that when oneness is predicated of God it is more than mere mathematical unity.

Thus the doctrine of the one God proclaimed by the Hebrew Prophets was never a barren monotheism. The Jews believed that all the divine powers and functions, distributed among many gods by the heathen, were concentrated in Yahweh. His being had diversity as well as unity, cf. 1 Cor. 8:5 f. This enabled Old Testament Theology to have a conception of the One and the many. The references to the Name, the Presence, the Glory, the Word which God spoke by the

Prophets, the Wisdom by which He laid the foundations of the world, and the Angel of Yahweh whom men knew to be Yahweh Himself, all preclude bare unity in the thought about God. It was a manifold oneness.

In the later period, Jewish theology stressed two apparently contradictory ideas: God active in the world; God so holy as to be separate from the world. This illustrates the difficulty of giving a satisfactory account of the relation of God to the world on the basis of a mere unitary idea of His Oneness. Attempts to meet the difficulty and to reconcile the two ideas were made by postulating some superhuman being e.g., Glory or Word, mediating between God and the world; or by treating some aspect of His being e.g., Wisdom, Spirit, as more or less distinguishable from Him. In the days just before Christ, there was even a tendency to personalize the manifestations of God in Word and Wisdom. The development of the doctrines of Spirit and Angel point the same way.

Beyond this we cannot go in respect of the pre-Christian evidence. It is the Christian facts alone which provide the basis for the doctrine that the unity of God is triune. The most we can say is that there are elements in Jewish monotheism which make the doctrine of the Trinity not denial but fulfilment. Moreover, when the New Testament came to set out the facts of the fuller revelation in Christ, it had available terms and ideas which could be adapted to its own purposes e.g.; Paul's use of *Wisdom* and John's of *Word*.

G. A. F. Knight: *The Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity* brings to bear on the doctrine the most recent understanding of Hebrew thought forms.

*See Trinity Note page 3*  
In his Grammar of Assent, Newman argued that it is possible to assent to the doctrine of the Trinity even when we cannot comprehend it in its fulness. He summed up the Biblical basis of the doctrine in a list of propositions to each of which we can and do assent. We too can make such a list which gathers together what we have considered in detail above. Cf. A. C. Headlam: *Christian Theology* 429 ff.

(i) There is one God. This is the great fundamental certainty of the whole Bible. It is the total witness of the Old Testament e.g., Deut. 4:35; 6:4; Isa. 44:6; 45:5. As such it is accepted as an axiom by every New Testament writer. Of this every verse naming God could be cited as evidence.

There are certain quite explicit assertions e.g., Mark 12:29 ff.; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25.

(ii) The Father is God. This is both basis and conclusion of all that Jesus revealed concerning the nature of God e.g., John 8:54; 17:1ff.; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6.

(iii) Jesus Christ the Son is God. This is the great certainty of all the Apostolic preaching and the only adequate conclusion from the Gospel facts, e.g., John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:5ff.; Col. 1:16ff.; Heb. 1:1ff.

(iv) The Holy Spirit is God. This is the only possible conclusion from all that the New Testament teaches concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit as revealed at and after Pentecost, e.g., John 14:25 f.; 15:26 f.; 16:5 ff.; Rom. 8:4 ff.; 2 Cor. 3:16 ff.; 13:14.

(v) The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each distinct from one another. The New Testament, while teaching the closest communion of Father and Son, always points to a real distinction of work and will between them. John 5:36 f. is typical of this aspect of New Testament revelation, cf. John 6:38; 8:42; 12:49; Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:9. There is similar witness to the close communion but clear distinction between the Spirit, and the Father and the Son, e.g., John 14:16,25 f.; Heb. 9:14. The language of the New Testament as a whole implies a distinction between the three.

(vi) The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each spoken of as personal. There has never been any doubt that the New Testament speaks in personal terms of the Father and the Son; and we have seen in Chapter III, that there are compelling reasons for saying the same about the Spirit who is clearly a He and not an It, e.g., Rom. 8.

(vii) The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are spoken of as one. All the New Testament writers emphasize the unity of the three even while they recognize that they can be distinguished, e.g., John 17:21 f.; 1 Cor. 2:11 f. When God speaks, sometimes it is the Father, sometimes the Son, sometimes the Spirit; but He who speaks is One God e.g., Mark 13:11; John 5:35 ff.; 2 Cor. 13:3. Throughout there is the sense alike of separateness and unity in the being and work of Father, Son and Spirit.

All these truths we believe on the evidence of Scripture. When we hold them together we have the materials out of

which the doctrine of the Trinity is formed. We shall see that although the doctrine is not *explicit* in the New Testament it is the only way by which to formulate its total witness to the truth about God and His redemptive action in history.

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

The Bible is the record of the mighty acts of God. It also records the experience of those by whom the acts were received as the revelation of who God is. It is necessary to stress the fact that behind the formulation of the Biblical evidence in the doctrine of the Trinity lies the Christian experience of God. The doctrine which is spurned by many as being merely 'theoretical' is in fact the expression of the actual experience of those who believed in God as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The great facts which we have set out in the seven propositions above had a certain meaning for the worshipping Church. This compelled the Church to think, and to answer questions.

In the first place the Church had a sound knowledge of God as Creator. Many of the early Christians were Jews, reared on the Old Testament to have firm faith in the one God. Many of the Gentile converts had learned to share this faith through their contacts with Judaism and others were soon led to it in the Church. In general there was little difficulty about belief in the one God over all, Creator and Father. Indeed to worship another was to commit idolatry, the worst sin of all.

Then what about Jesus? They were quite certain that He had been born of a woman, lived a truly human life, and died a truly human death. It was no less certain that He had been raised from the dead. On the evidence of all the facts they believed Him to be also truly divine. He was true man and true God; not just a part, or phase, or activity of God, but really and truly God.

That was a hard enough problem for men who believed that God is one. It was made even more difficult by what happened at Pentecost. As they pondered over that event and lived in and by its effects, Christians were certain that here also was the revelation of God. The Holy Spirit, again, was not a part, phase, or activity of God, but God Himself.

The problem, which is ours today as much as it was our fathers' at the beginning is quite clear. The Father is God, Jesus is God, the Holy Spirit is God. There is a difference each from each, but there is only one God. They are not three separate beings but a unity. They are not three parts phases, or activities of the one God because each is, in a real sense, wholly God. This was not theory. It was the personal experience of men who had come to the Father, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. The problem had to be solved by finding some form of words which would sum up the Biblical revelation of God and ensure that the essential facts of the Christian experience were preserved.

We do not find the required *formula* in the New Testament, but we do find the facts and experience out of which it was to come. The worship, knowledge and experience of the first Church raised questions to which the doctrine of the Trinity is the only possible answer. All that was later to be expressed in formula was present from the beginning. It took time to find the required form of words, and in the process discussion became highly technical. The terms were produced by Christian thinkers working on the Gospel facts. It is not that they had nothing better to do. They were not inventing complicated formulas and splitting hairs because they liked doing that kind of thing. They were driven to it by the practical necessity of thinking and worshipping as *Christian monotheists*. They saw that if they did not find the right answer to the problems raised by the Christian facts, then the facts themselves were weakened. If they did not hold together what they knew about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit within the certainty that God is one there was the danger that Christians would surrender one or other element of the total faith. The Church was forced into trinitarian thinking by the facts of its faith and worship. Because they would not surrender any of the facts but faced the difficulties which these created, the theologians of the early Church have enabled us to see who is the God who has so revealed Himself to us. They help us to understand, for example, how the Son can love and speak to the Father and why Jesus, as Son of God on earth, could pray to His Father.

How God can be one and three may be a mystery beyond the power of any man to comprehend rationally. We can



but say that the Gospel proclaims that there is God the Father, Maker of Heaven and earth; God the Son, our Saviour; God the Holy Spirit come to dwell in our hearts: One God. This revelation of Himself in the Bible, God confirms in our hearts. We know it to be true. Along with Paul and John and the Christians of all the ages we know the *realities* summed up in the seven propositions above. Our belief in One God is real. We know that in Jesus we have seen the glory as of the only-begotten Son of God. We know that when the Holy Spirit guides and enlightens us it is the work of God in us. This is not imagination. It is the knowledge of what is real. It is the revelation of what God is. We may not see all the truth but what we do see through Christ and the Spirit is true.

This is the knowledge which the Church has taken up and expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity. Much thought has gone to it but it is not mere speculation. Religious experience lies behind it but it is not the rationalization of feelings. The doctrine is the faith of the simple Christian who sets his hope not on some remote deity but on the heavenly Father; on the Son of God who took his human nature; on the Holy Spirit, present as Lord and Life-Giver, inspiring every right thought and action. So the Bible teaches and so the Church believes.

#### 4. THE PROCESS OF FORMULATION

The formula *One God in Three Persons* represents the solution of the problems raised by the Incarnation in a monotheistic religion. The Revelation which declares God to be One also speaks of Him in three ways which are fundamental to Christian thought about God but which at first sight seem incompatible with the prior belief in His oneness. The Church had to make sense of this and to do so by answering some hard questions, e.g., How to hold the distinction of Father, Son and Spirit without denying the Oneness of God? How to think of a divine Oneness transcending but not abolishing the distinctions? It had to do this in a world in which the commonest error was the worship of many gods. The Church confronted polytheism, with all its divided standards and conflicting purposes, hindering goodness and progress and

lacking the cohesion of a unifying Spiritual power, with the monotheism which it inherited from Old Israel and from which it never departed or intended to depart.

It had learned, however from the later Jewish theologians, as the Bhaktas in Hinduism and the Sufis in Islam have discovered, that sheer monotheism is not enough for the deepest needs of the human soul. Over-emphasis on the transcendence of God is apt to make Him an abstraction remote from the world and to prevent that communion with Him which is the greatest need of man. In reaction from this error men have tended to swing to over-emphasis on the immanence of God and to take refuge in panthesim. Between these errors of excluding God from His world or of imprisoning Him within it, and in utter denial of polytheism, the Church had to steer its doctrine of God as revealed in the Gospel facts. It was fidelity to these which compelled the Church to define what it meant by monotheism. It did so by defining its idea of oneness in terms not of tritheism but of triunity.

The Gospel proclaimed that God is One but revealed such variety within the oneness that God could be thought of as both transcendent and immanent. He is at once Lord over the world and within it. This knowledge was enlarged by the certainty that God had manifested Himself in Christ in flesh, thus finding room in Christian monotheism for God incarnate on earth. The One God is, therefore, at once author of creation Lord of its destiny; the dynamic energy of life; and the Saviour in whom the divine self-revealing activity has its greatest historical manifestation.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is the inference from this given evidence to the nature of God. The evidence does not deny monotheism but shows what the true divine oneness is. Its main effect is to preserve the monotheism which is the axiom of the whole Bible in the face of facts which at first seemed to challenge it, but on deeper reflection proved how much richer is the oneness of God than men had previously believed.

The doctrine, as making explicit the Biblical revelation, became articulate in the Church only gradually, and after much painful struggle. It was by a process of controversy that a form of words was found which gave the right answer to the hard questions, and safeguarded all the aspects of Christian truth. It happened mainly as the Church considered

the problem of the relation of the Father and the Son. Once this was settled problems concerning the Holy Spirit were met more easily. In fact, the discussions of the person of Christ to the end of the fourth century are virtually trinitarian.

Thus the doctrine was developed, on the basis of data implicitly trinitarian from the beginning, as the Church defended Christian monotheism against two types of error:

(i) The first wrong answer to the problem of holding together the unity of God and the divinity of Christ erred in denying any real and eternal distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit. Sabellius and others regarded these as names representing temporary modes, phases, functions or acts of the supreme, and ultimately unknowable, divine Being. It was even suggested that the One God had revealed Himself in the Old Covenant as Father; in the New Covenant as Son; and in the Church as Spirit.

(ii) The second wrong answer was due to over-emphasis on the transcendence of the Father. Arius so subordinated the Son and the Spirit as to question their true divinity and to make them two lesser gods.

In meeting these errors the common sense of the Church held fast to the reality of the Incarnation. It was made clear that if Christ and the Spirit are truly divine, they are not added to the Father but are identically God with Him, i.e., three Persons; not three gods or three parts of God but one God who revealed Himself to be eternally tri-personal. These personal distinctions are not such as to deny, qualify, or destroy the oneness of God but are eternally within it. Thus, after a long hard struggle, the Cappadocian Fathers in the East and Augustine in the West made explicit, in Greek and Latin respectively, what was always implicit in the New Testament: 'We believe in one and the same Godhead in the hypostases of three Persons of equal honour and equal power, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'.

This is more than a mere form of words. It represents the truth, gathering the Biblical data in terms of the language of the day. God is Trinity in Unity—not one or three individuals in God, but a personal unity existing in three eternal modes. As between the two extremes mentioned above, the Church meant by *person* something more than a phase and

something less than an individual. It declared the oneness of God in the light of the knowledge that Christ is the Son who reveals the Father and gives the Spirit. In this formula was expressed the fuller revelation of the meaning of the divine oneness in the Incarnation. God is One—there was no hesitation here—and within His oneness are the three eternal distinctions.

The doctrine of *One God in Three Persons* guards against tritheism (three gods) and Sabellianism (three aspects of one God). The triune Oneness is not an association of three gods (polytheism) not a bare unity revealed in three aspects (unitarianism). It is a Oneness in which are three co-equal and co-eternal beings. Each Person expresses the whole Godhead.

The doctrine, as formulated in the great classical statements, is no mere speculation. It is the answer of the worshipping Church to speculations which threatened to pervert and destroy the faith by re-stating it in terms of a non-Biblical theology. The formulation, expressed in current terms, was not an attempt to define God, but a guard against imperfect and one-sided teaching.

The clear exposition of Augustine has been embodied in the Athanasian Creed. This important document sets out in doctrine the religious witness of the Benediction to the richness of the divine unity. Its affirmations concerning the God whom Christians worship do justice to the truth about God implied in the Christian revelation while recognizing that no human words can be final. It stresses the revealed facts and confesses the essential mystery of God. This is the proper perspective of Christian theology. The believer does not know all; but he knows enough to trust the unknown. We cannot contain the truth of God in a formula, even though that formula is true as far as it goes. No man dare say that he 'understands the Trinity' but he can say that the God whom He worships is the eternal triune God, cf. Isa. 45:15; Rom. 11:34; 1 Tim. 6:15 f.

A. E. J. Rawlinson (Ed.): *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation* includes much important material for understanding the early history of the doctrine. R. S. Franks: *The Doctrine of the Trinity* is a simpler account of the history and is especially good on the modern period.

## 5. THE MEANING OF 'PERSON'

Many attempts have been made to help the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity by the use of analogy. Use has been made of illustrations such as the sun, the ray, the light; three petals in one leaf; time as one but having past, present and future; objects having length, breadth and thickness. These may help up to a point but they have no ultimate value. I have found most light in the suggestion that experience, in general, demonstrates that unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity are facts as wide as life itself. The analogy is worked out fully by Ryder Smith in *The Christian Experience* 162 ff. Very briefly, the argument runs that if we take e.g., a stone we find various qualities of size, shape, weight, colour, hardness etc., all of which cohere in the one stone according to that which makes a stone a stone. We take a plant and see in it root, stem, flower, fruit etc., which belong together according to the plant principle. The general fact has growing significance as we move up the scale of being from inanimate objects to man. In him the powers of thought, feeling and will are unified in that which distinguishes mankind from the rest of creation, with which he has so much in common, viz., personality. Ryder Smith asks: Why should this fact end with man? Why should not God Himself exhibit in the highest way of all a charactersitic which pervades His universe? Is the mere fact that diversity along with unity appears to be a mathematical and logical contradiction to make incredible in God what is continually experienced in so many other ways? He concludes that experience in general indicates that it is in harmony with all our knowledge that God is unity-in-diversity; and the Christian experience in particular defines the divine diversity as trinity.

The main value of this argument lies in its stress on the concept of personality as the highest example of the fact of unity in diversity. In the human person the various elements of thought, feeling and will are unified in the way proper to man. It is as a person, moreover, that man finds himself to be a member of a larger whole. We have already noted, cf. Chapter IV § 6, that, although human personality is but a pale copy of the divine, it can help us to the understanding of what it is in Him who made us in His image as persons.

Personality is the highest category of human life. It is this which distinguishes man from the rest of creation. The nearer a man is to God the more he is a person. There is likeness between human personality and divine, but not simply likeness. The personality of God is infinitely richer than ours. In our personality there is one centre, the self; but in God there are three personal centres in eternal and perfect harmony, cf. John 15:26 f.; 17:21.

There is no word, ancient or modern, which exactly describes the relation of the diversity within the Godhead; nor is there any word which means exactly the same then and now. From the beginning, however, *person* has been found the least objectionable term. In the days when Augustine and others sought to give expression to the Christian doctrine of God *person* meant the character of an actor. One actor could represent many persons. For want of a better word the theologians used it to describe the three 'aspects' of God revealed to us as Father, Son and Spirit. They meant that God, as it were, plays three roles in the drama of life and each is wholly characteristic of Him. All three make up the being of Him who is in Himself Maker, Saviour, Inspirer. They were careful to add that the three 'roles' were not passing appearances but eternal facts of God.

Unfortunately *person* as used today overstates the degree of separateness involved in the doctrine. Indeed if we use *person* in the modern sense we are tritheists when we confess 'God in three Persons'. Here is a real problem. Much misunderstanding has come in modern times from the assumption that 'persons' in the fifth century formula means the same as it does today. It has become a much more technical and complex term than it was for Augustine. He had no idea that the word would come to stand for a separate distinct individuality. He meant that as we can distinguish in a man mind, feeling and will but not separate them from the unity of the man, so in God we see three essential 'aspects' of His being which are utterly and eternally one. The God we worship as Creator is not to be thought of as independent of Him whom we know as Son or Spirit. What we see in Christ reveals Him who is always Father. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is the work of the same God who made and redeemed us. Whether we worship Him as Father, Son, or

Spirit, it is one and the same God. We confess that the ultimate being of God is a mystery but we cannot say less than this if we are to be faithful to the facts of His self-revelation.

We have seen that the Church did not begin with a doctrine of the Trinity but was compelled to frame one because of the facts of the faith. When the theologians declared that there are three Persons in one God they did not mean three separate self-conscious individuals but three personal centres within the life of the one God. God is One. There is no activity of the Son or the Spirit which is not equally that of the Father. The three express the distinctive realities which have been disclosed in the divine self-revelation.

The formula *Three Persons in One God* is not wholly satisfactory. No formula can be. But there is no better one. It creates problems but it is important that we should not make things more difficult by making *person* mean *individual*. Use the Church's formula in the Church's way.

Here the analogy of human experience can help again. Each of us can say to his friend; I am I, and you are you; but we are not wholly isolated from each other. We are bound together in the various relations of life. So it is with all men. When things go wrong it is because one or more members of a family, village, church, nation or world have been acting as though they were independent of the other members i.e., as mere individuals. Men, made in God's Image, are not individuals, isolated from each other; but persons, members of one another. Personality implies the *I and Thou* relation. There is no personality in isolation, only in communion. What is true even at the human level reaches its climax at the divine. The personal God is in Himself tri-personal.

To understand this we may refer back to the great utterance in which the Biblical revelation reaches its climax: *God is love*. The Bible does not say that God created love, or that He made man and then began to love Him. It means not only that God loves others, but that He is love in Himself. We know, from our own experience of love that it implies a lover and a beloved. This points to what God is in Himself. It is meaningless to predicate love, in the Biblical sense, either, of a unitarian God as in Islam, or of an impersonal



absolute as in Hinduism. To call God love implies that there is in Him both distinction and personality. It is just this that the doctrine says when it speaks of the tri-personality of God. It witnesses, as Hodgson stresses, to the One God who lives eternally the life of personal communion whereby the Father and the Son eternally give themselves in responsive love through the Holy Spirit. To say that God is love means not only that God loves us, but that He is love in Himself. He has no need of His creatures to be the objects of His love in order to be Himself. He is eternally the Father loving the Son and the Spirit their bond of love. The doctrine of the Trinity is not easy but it does give us a glimpse into the life of God and shows how, in the eternal being of God, apart from creation, are all the elements of a full personal life of love.

C. S. Lewis: *Beyond Personality*.

D. L. Sayers: *The Mind of the Maker*.

## 6. SOME IMPLICATIONS

We are now in a position to consider the Christian answer to the Muslim charge that we worship three gods. The belief in the unity of God is more explicit in Islam even than in Judaism. 'There is no God but God . . . . He is God alone; God the Eternal. He begetteth not and He is not begotten. And there is none like unto Him...God is only one God. Far be it from His glory to have a Son'. This idea of divine unity is a strict *unicity*, a mathematical oneness. Despite movements away from extreme transcendence, any attempts to modify the doctrine of the One God are utterly condemned. Thus the Muslim tends to be horrified at Christian doctrine. It is true that many misconceive the Trinity as being that of Father, Mother and Son, but it is not enough to deny that we hold this form of Tri-theism. We have to show that the revealed facts compel a new understanding of the meaning of oneness in God; that the doctrine is the only possible inference from facts and experience. We have learned not to prescribe to God what His oneness must be, but to let Him correct man's imperfect ideas by the disclosure of his own true Oneness as 'not unicity but an internally constitutive

unity which by the intensity of its unifying power unites three persons, each equally personal' (Hodgson). We, no less than the Muslims, believe God to be one. We have learned from the Gospel that His is a unity in which are three co-equal and co-eternal Persons.

We have to meet not only the denials of the Muslim but the eagerness of the Hindu, who claims that there is a place for Trinitarian religion in Hinduism and points to the *Trimurthi* doctrine. In fact, like so many 'Trinitarian' parallels in other religions, the Trimurthi is in origin, tri-theistic. The doctrine results from an attempt to unite Hindu sects by a union of Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva; but all three are worshipped separately in the characters of creator, preserver and destroyer. In Christian doctrine, the fundamental unity of God is presupposed. Thus the Son reveals the Father and gives Himself in the Spirit. But Vishnu does not reveal Brahma, and he has no essential relation to Siva. Some Hindus recognize the tri-theistic implications of the Trimurthi doctrine and attempt to give it a philosophical explanation. They argue that the Supreme Spirit has become temporally conditioned with qualities, true only for the lower knowledge, and appears now as Brahmā, now as Vishnu, now as Siva. This is simply a form of one of the errors against which the doctrine of the Trinity guards Christian truth. It claims that only the Supreme It is real and the three gods are temporary modes of the ultimate and impersonal divine being.

Over against all doctrine of an impersonal Absolute, the doctrine of the Trinity stands as the crown and sum of the Christian belief that God is personal. We believe that what is true of each Person of the Trinity is true of God as One; that each Person is expressive of the Godhead as a whole. Thus our belief in the personality of God is safeguarded against any idea that, behind the three-fold personality, lies some ultimate impersonal being. The doctrine affirms, as nothing else can, the reality of personal, i.e., ethical and spiritual, relations between God and man; of prayer and communion; and of the hope of the vision of God in the life to come.

Even so brief a confrontation, with the doctrine of the Trinity, of those to whom the Gospel is preached in India,

is enough to suggest that one important justification of the belief that God is Three in One, is to be found in its correspondence with the religious needs of mankind. We pointed out at the beginning that Christian piety, no less than thinking, leads to and is supported by the belief. It may be that as stated in some formulas it does not immediately satisfy the needs of the ordinary Christian. When, however, we go on to consider it in terms of the love and work of God, a new warmth and understanding comes in.

Dr. Headlam has shown that when the ordinary believer tries to analyse his religion he finds that it implies a belief in God as Father and Maker, high and lifted up, ruling the world which he has made. If he stops there he soon finds that such a God becomes remote and external, unable to satisfy his deepest needs. He yearns for a God who has something in common with man; who can enter into and share his hopes and sorrows. He reads in the Gospels how God once became incarnate and learns that He who came to suffer and die for him is very God of very God. He discovers also that God is ready at all times to visit his heart and to work in him by His Spirit, teaching, inspiring and guiding. Of such a religion the doctrine of the Trinity is the necessary implication and expression. It holds us in trust and hope.

Every man is in need of a principle by which to live, a policy to apply it and a power to pursue it. We believe that God has met this need in the revelation of Himself to which the doctrine of the Trinity bears witness. Herein we know as has been said, that 'in His eternal righteousness, He rules and reigns. In His eternal love He enters human life to show the way of redemption and victory. In His eternal power He dwells with us to aid our weakness and to guide our steps'.

Whenever we talk about the Holy Trinity we should remember, as Dr. Austin Farrer stressed in a broadcast address, that we are making 'an undisguised confession of belief opened from the centre and not from the circumference'. Our study has been in vain if we have not learned that the centre is the love of God. We expound the Trinity as the meaning and the setting of the love which the Father has bestowed upon us. It is not likely to mean very much except to those who have learned of the love of God in Christ

through the Spirit. 'The Trinity', concludes Dr. Farrer, 'is revealed to Christians because they are taken into the Trinity, because the three-fold love of God wraps them round, because it is in the Trinity they have their Christian being. Every time I worship or pray or make the least motion of the heart towards God I stand with the divine Son in the face of the divine Father, the mantle of His sonship spread around me, and the love of the Father overflowing from Him to me in the grace of the Holy Ghost.' (See *Theology* September 1953, 322 ff.)

We have tried in these pages to show that this doctrine is that which alone gives form and coherence to the Biblical doctrine of the personal God, and meets the deepest needs of the soul. We ought never to think of it as merely abstract. To the believer the doctrine makes a direct appeal. If it does not, the blame must rest on the particular statement of the doctrine. Let nothing obscure the prior fact that the Holy Trinity is apprehended by faith as the object of Christian worship. 'The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity'. The faith with which we come to worship is not the mere assent of the mind to doctrine; it involves the whole man. It has an intellectual element, for the faith depends on historical events which must be known; but it is more than rational assent. It is the response of the whole man to the God who made us for Himself through the Son of God who redeemed us, by the power of God the Holy Spirit who moves us to respond. Eternal life is to know God. The doctrine of the Trinity is the summary of God's self-revelation in response to which we live the life of faith.

Hodgson ends his suggestive study by pointing out that the doctrine which began, not in the speculations of the few but in the fidelity of the whole Church to what it had received, leads on to the characteristically Christian ways of worship and service, e.g., giving the pattern of unity for the individual and society; enabling us to see the relation of God and man in due proportion; shedding light on the hope of immortality '.....founded on fact, illuminating the mind, guiding the life, the doctrine of the Trinity draws forth our grateful adoration of the God who thus blessed us in revealing Himself to us'.

There is no better way to close this attempt to see what the Christian means by *God* than to recall the words of Scripture gathered together in one of the great traditional ascriptions of praise:

And now, to God the Father, who loved us  
and made us accepted in the Beloved;  
To God the Son, who loved us and washed  
us from our sins in His own blood;  
To God the Holy Spirit, who sheddeth the  
love of God abroad in our hearts,  
To the One God, be all love and honour  
and praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

- C. Welch: *The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* shows how recent theologians have brought the doctrine from comparative neglect into the forefront of Christian thinking, whether beginning with it e.g., Barth, or leading up to it e. g., Hodgson. Cf. D. M. Baillie: *God was in Christ* 133 ff.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

#### 1. IS THE UNIVERSE FRIENDLY?

THIS question, which can be put in many ways, is said to be the ultimate question of mankind. To it religion must give an answer. The Christian answer is summed up in the great word *Providence*. This contains and expresses the belief that God governs all things and over-rules all events for perfectly holy and loving ends; that He has every human life in His gracious keeping. In using this word we confess our faith in God's wise and tender care over all His creatures: His constant regard for their needs; His ability to order the universe for good. It implies the confidence that God is faithful in every event and crisis of nature, history, and individual life. The world is God's world. He is supreme in it and over it. He cares for what He has made and disregards none.

The doctrine of divine Providence is no human discovery; it has behind it the whole weight of the Biblical revelation, e.g., Gen. 1:1-2:24; Exod. 19:4; Job. 36:5; 38-41; Ps. 3:5; 8; 14; 23; 31:19; 37:25; 136:25; Isa. 40:12-26; 45:18 ff.; Jer. 1:8; Lam. 3:22; Matt. 5:45; 6:1-7:12; 10:29; Luke 12:6; 22 ff.; 12:18; John 1:1-18; 5:17 ff.; 14:6 ff.; Acts 17:24 ff.; Col. 1:9-23; Heb. 11:40. Moreover, it has been, all down the years, the constant experience of those who have received the revelation that herein they have the clue to the understanding of much that would otherwise be unintelligible. They have an assurance that the whole course of events is under the hands of God; that no happening or circumstance of life, even such as are the result of man's sin and so contrary to the will of God, is outside the scope of His care and purpose. Thus, in the Christian doctrine of God, the loving-kindness of Providence matches the power of Creation. On this foundation the believer stands firm as he faces the many facts which cause doubt, fear, and scepticism.

It must be admitted that there is much in the words and actions of many who call themselves believers which virtually denies the doctrine of Providence. All talk of 'chance', 'fate',

and 'luck'; any superstitious practice; all forms of gambling, repudiate the faith that all our ways are ordered by the Father and strike at the root of the Christian message to those who believe that the world is the plaything of chance and that men are at the mercy of fate. It is not always what a man says he believes which represents his real beliefs. The real faith, or lack of faith, is that which, in fact, underlies his actions. Thus the doctrine of Providence challenges, and is challenged by, the manner in which religion is expressed in life.

There are other facts, however, which offer an even more serious challenge to the doctrine of Providence. Any daily paper and the life of every man, some more than others, puts this faith to the test. In the last chapter we have seen that the Biblical revelation of God is summed up in the doctrine of the Trinity which declares that the nature and the name of God is Love. Then what are we to say about evil? How much there is in the experience of the world and of the individual which seems to deny the love of God, or His power, or both. There has never been a time but some believers have confessed with the Psalmist; My foot has well nigh slipped.....Ps. 73:2f. We cannot ignore the unending problem of how to reconcile the evil and suffering of life with the wisdom, love and power of God. When all is taken into account dare we say, with confidence, that the universe is friendly?

The facts suggest that the universe has so been made as to produce, along with good, sin, ugliness, pain, suffering and all manner of evil. How does our doctrine of divine Providence fit in with the evil of the world of which we are all witnesses and, in one way or another, sharers? We think of those, especially innocent children, who suffer through no fault of their own; of the suffering of animals. How meaningless much of it seems to be. It may be that pain is necessary for the development of God's creatures and that the capacity to suffer and endure it is characteristic of the higher levels of life. Yet so often a point is reached beyond which pain serves no useful purpose. Why is it allowed to persist? What gain is there? In all ages, the sufferer has been a problem to himself and to others. It is not natural for man to see meaning or value in suffering. We can understand why



so many in India declare it to be unreal. 'Say what you like', says Fr. D'Arcy commenting on reasoned arguments to meet the problem, 'the problem remains, and we are not so convinced of the existence of God as to be unmoved by the spectacle of pain'. There is no need to make the problem more difficult, as some do, by trying to add all evil into some unimaginable total. Find the heaviest burden laid on the most innocent person with the smallest prospect of good, resulting from it, and you have the problem at its acutest.

We must recognize at this point that while evil is a fact for all men it is only a problem for some. As we have noted, the Hindu disposes of suffering by treating it as unreal. The fact becomes a problem only for those who assert the Providence of a good God who appears to tolerate evil. The problem of evil is most acute for the Christian. The really hard questions arise when we set the facts alongside the Christian doctrine of God. On any other doctrine evil is a fact but not a problem. The problem emerges when we take good and evil seriously; it becomes urgent when we say that God is not merely good but loving and almighty. Evil is no problem for those who regard God as a non-moral absolute, transcending good and evil, working out His eternal designs with lofty indifference to the plight of His creatures. It is no problem for those who accept the doctrines of *lila*, *maya* and *karma*. The problem is to reconcile the Christian doctrine of God with the fact of evil; to maintain that His Providence is over all that He has made, in the face of all the terrible fact of human, animal, physical and moral evil; to recognize that all these things could not be without the permission of Him who made the world good. Are we, in the end, at the mercy of the God of love, or of evil and malignant forces? The question abides: Is the universe friendly?

John Hadham: *Good God.*

D. S. Cairns: *The Faith that rebels.*

R. Knox: *God and the Atom.*

## 2. FREEDOM AND SOLIDARITY

Not all recognize the urgency of the question. There are some Christians who meet trouble with mere passive resignation to the will of God and in a vague hope that somehow things will turn out all right in the end. Others interpret the doctrine of Providence as a kind of insurance against evil, thinking that it cannot touch the believer. If and when it does, they think that God has deceived them. Against these parodies of Christian belief we take our stand on the teaching of the Bible that evil, and the suffering to which it leads, is real; but that it is within the Providence of God and can be overcome. We shall not attempt to disguise the magnitude of the problem or to evade the difficulties. The mystery of evil is a mystery. It is the acid test of our doctrine of God.

In the address from which we quoted above, Dr. Farrer makes the point that it is never easy for the Christian to talk about the love of God. 'To speak of divine love', he says, 'is not complacency towards ourselves, but neither is it callousness towards mankind. I say this because I find that in many people's eyes, to exalt the love of God is a crime against human sympathy. Only a hardened heart (they say) can praise the government of a universe which allows intolerable evils. But.....the Christian heart is not a hardened heart. We are just *men*, we feel what you feel. Are your dearest and most natural wishes often utterly frustrated? So are ours. Do your friends die of cancer in their early fifties? So do ours. If atom bombs crack over our heads the year after next, will it be your tragedy? It will be ours too. Is the web of life in which you are enmeshed a tissue of moral disappointment and ignoble compromises? Our situation is largely the same. We neither deny nor palliate any of these evils for we do not uphold a theology of divine benevolence or pretend that the Kingdom of God is an omnipotent welfare state'.

This wise word reminds us that although the problem of evil is most acute for the Christian, it has always been a problem also for any who predicate goodness and power of God. We have already noted the dilemma: either God tolerates evil because He cannot overcome it, in which case He is not

almighty; or He tolerates it because He does not care, in which case He is not good. There have been some who attempt to resolve the dilemma by accepting the former alternative and so keep the goodness of a 'limited' God, at the price of His power. Such, for example, is the Parsi doctrine of good and evil powers in eternal conflict. This dualism, however, does not solve the problem for it requires, behind the two powers, some final absolute to keep them in being. Only this can really be called God. We are concerned with the relation of evil to the ultimate Being who is the source of all that exists. The problem can be met only by belief in an almighty Being who, whatever may happen to us, can in the end make our lives, and the universe, perfectly fulfil His purpose of love.

I believe that we have good reasons for such a belief. It is possible to reconcile our doctrine of God with the fact of evil if we can be sure of a providential purpose, moving surely to a good end, but the process of which allows for temporary contradictions and tensions. Our first approach to the problem will be along this line. It is not for us to define and justify God's dealings with His creatures. We cannot expect to know all the details of His purpose. Yet I believe that He has shown us sufficient to be sure that His plan is good and that He will bring it to pass. Again, when all is said that can be said, evil is a mystery because we do not, and cannot, have the full data for an explanation. Every attempt to wrestle with the enigma of human suffering, for example, leaves us wondering whether argument can ever give more than partial answers to our stubborn questions. Even as the sufferings of the Cross are beyond the reach of all our reasonings, so also are the mysterious pains which seem to be part of God's purposes for creation. Yet it is not mere mystery because we have facts which point to suffering as having moral ends. These facts, for which the evidence is found partly in what has been written above and partly in what follows in Volume II, suggest that God both created the world and continues to work out His purpose for it and in it by the two great principles of *freedom* and *solidarity*. To understand these, and their implications, can carry us a long way in resolving the problem of evil and meeting its challenge to our doctrine of God.

(i) We have already referred to the importance of freedom in our discussion of creation and have seen that the very gift of freedom involves the possibility of sin. The Biblical account of the divine purpose to bring into being the perfect society of free sons is confirmed by evidence from many sides that life is directed towards the production of morally responsible beings. Freedom means that a man may choose wrong as well as right. God took this risk when He made us free. He did not will evil but He willed a state of affairs in which evil is possible. Even when men choose wrong, God still respects their freedom. The Father, who treats His children as persons not puppets, will not deprive us of freedom even to prevent us from sin, and the consequent suffering. For He has so made the world that when men reject Him and defy His laws, suffering follows.

An outstanding example of the problem of evil is poverty. Can a good God allow His children to starve? We look deeper and find that the root of the trouble is not the amount of food available but the unfair distribution. This is the fault, not of God, but of man who uses his freedom to be greedy. This is but one simple illustration of the fact that a large part of the world's suffering is caused by the misuse of freedom in sin and folly. Thus much of the mystery of evil becomes intelligible as a 'by-product' of the freedom necessary to the divine purpose of a Kingdom of free spirits. That this is only temporary we can be sure. God knows that His final purpose will not be defeated and He imparts this knowledge to us as He works with us to produce something worthy of that purpose.

In this context we may add two comments. The first points forward to the great fact, which we shall develop later, that the very love of God, which makes the existence of evil a problem for the believer, is also its solution. T.E. Jessop concludes his study of *Nature, History and God* by saying: 'Love is the only good thing I know that can be trusted to bring forth what looks like evil and handle it safely. And it is the only good thing I know that can look upon real evil, as produced by man, with inexhaustible tolerance. If any spirit but a loving spirit had watched over history, He would have asserted His purposes more imperiously, perhaps shattering it to bits and remoulding it nearer to His heart's

desire. When we turn...to the full-eyed contemplation of the human race's misdoings, we may conclude that the cost to God of respecting the individual man's freedom has been so immeasurable that only love...could have borne it.'

The second is to stress the fact that so many people accept suffering bravely. This is not just a making the best of a bad business. The true context and the reasonable basis of the refusal to be daunted by evil or to regard suffering as meaningless is the Biblical doctrine of creation. The Bible offers no short cuts to untroubled tranquillity, but it does show that belief in God makes all the difference to the way in which the testing of belief can be met. It teaches that the world is a 'vale of soul-making', carried on not for our comfort or convenience but for character. Nothing can be made of man till he learns courage and this is learned only in danger and difficulty. Pain itself may be the wise and loving discipline of the Father to the end that His sons may partake of His holiness.

The fact that so many are called to endure the hard things of life and to do without many of the good things is no ground for doubting God's goodness unless we believe that a comfortable life in this world is the best thing for man. For this we have no warrant at all. The Christian view is that which is implied in Rom. 5:1 ff., where the sequence of experience which begins with trouble, passes through endurance and tested character, and ends with hope. The man who wrote this, in common with most of the Biblical writers, was familiar with pain and hardship. Reflection will show that there is no ground for hope unless we begin by facing trouble honestly, cf. Heb. 12.

(ii) What has been said of the evil resulting from man's abuse of his freedom applies only to that for which the individual is personally responsible. There is the greater problem of evil that is apart from our own choice; all the suffering that we have to endure but which cannot be traced to our own sinning. Indeed the main problem is not so much the fact that there is suffering in the world as that it often falls as we say, on the wrong people. But who are the right people? We tend to think that trouble ought to come to those who deserve it, and protest when it comes to the young, the innocent, the promising and the useful. God, however,

does not rule by the principle of exact reward and punishment. As we saw above in our treatment of Matt. 20:1 ff., God has created mankind a family, and He continues to treat us as such. We are all members one of another. Much of the good we enjoy comes through others and is unearned by us. We are each in debt to the race. We cannot, then, expect to avoid the evil and the suffering. Much of it is, as we have seen, the penalty of sin; but not merely of the individual sinning. The results fall on others with whom the sinner is bound in the community of life.

Thus much of the mysterious evil for which no one seems directly responsible can be explained by this principle of the solidarity of life. God has made the world a universe in which solidarity is the basis both of good and evil. He has set us all, for example, in families and has so ordered things that much depends on the father. Very often he is good, more or less, and through him the whole family has much blessing. But when the father is bad, wife and children have to endure evil that is quite independent of any wrong choices of their own. God cannot over-rule the evil consequence for one family without destroying the whole basis of solidarity on which all families are built. He tolerates the evil, but does not will it, because solidarity is the condition of all the good which the family represents. Again, in the world of nature there are calamities, such as flood or earthquake, in which man has no share and over which he has no control out from which he suffers greatly. These events, however, can happen only because God has made the world according to constant laws of working. Here too the principle of solidarity holds good. Were God to make the floods impossible, He would make impossible also the growth of food.

On this basis we reach the conclusion that men suffer, to a great extent, for and with one another. Suffering is not measured out either as punishment or as discipline. It falls on all, requiring each to share in the travail of the world. Life is like this and we believe that God has so ordained it and, as we shall see, that He Himself has part in it. There is assurance that those who accept nobly their share in the world's suffering find it worth-while in that they so come into personal relations with God as sharers in the divine plan for the redemption of the world.

- P. T. Forsyth: *The Justification of God.*  
 C. S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain.*  
 A. P. Shepherd: *Sin, Suffering and God.*  
 M. C. D'Arcy: *The Pain of this World and the Providence of God.*  
 L. D. Weatherhead: *Why do Men Suffer?*  
 J. James: *Why Evil?*

### 3. THE PRINCE OF EVIL

We have acknowledged that we are here concerned with a problem in which the powers of human argument are limited and we may have to confess with Pascal that 'the Heart has reasons of its own, which the Reason does not know'. Yet we can claim that the general line of discussion outlined above does help us to begin to make sense of the problem of evil and to bring into harmony with our doctrine of God the very facts which seem to deny it. The two great principles by which God created and maintains the world can account for regress as well as progress. We may not shirk the fact that in the world which God made for freedom, man's abilities are apt for wrong as well as for right; and that in His universe there is a solidarity in evil as well as in good. There is something tragically wrong with the world which God made good, but *how* this has come about is not a complete mystery.

The essence of tragedy is that something has gone wrong which ought not to have gone wrong. This, too, is a fact that cannot be explained away. The further and deeper question arises: Why has evil entered the world which God made good? This is a mysterious matter, but one thing is clear—the origin of evil must lie in some act of willed evil. God cannot create evil. It cannot be self-generated. The very fact of evil points back to some abuse of freedom in an act of evil choice of which the consequences have been carried forward in the solidarity of the race. This requires us to consider what is involved in the idea of a personal power of evil usually named Satan or the Devil, i.e., the Prince rather than merely the principle of evil.

There is in the New Testament the clear belief that there is a great conflict in the universe between God and all that is opposed to His holy love. The Gospels take the existence of evil spirits seriously and regard disease as due to the work of Satan and his agents. Hence healing involves exorcism,



e.g., Mark 1:32 ff.; 3:14 ff.; and the early Church held the casting out of devils to be as important as preaching, e.g., Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16 ff.; 19:11 ff.; 1 Cor. 12:9 ff.; cf. 2 Cor. 6:14—7:1. All in all Christ was proclaimed as having won the victory over all the powers of evil.

Much lies behind this. In the Old Testament, devils i.e., malignant spirits, are mentioned only in Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37 but there was much development of the idea in later Judaism which expounded passages, such as Gen. 6:1-4 and Isa. 14:12, to show that the existence of evil spirits is due not to God's creation but to the rebellion of free spirits against Him. Again, in the Old Testament, Satan is the Adversary, human or superhuman. In 1 Ch. 21:1 occurs the idea that Satan instigated David to sin and this was developed in later Judaism. Here Satan appears as the head of the hierarchy of evil powers. He is named Belial, Beelzebul, Azazel; and is said to be an angel, originally good but now fallen. 2 Enoch 29:4. He is the enemy of man and seeks to destroy him by attacking the body with disease and the soul with temptation. He was identified with the serpent of Gen. 3, and made responsible for sin and death, Wisdom 2:24.

The Jewish doctrine of a personal devil is very prominent in the New Testament which thinks, in general, of evil as the Evil One, cf. Matt. 4:1 ff.; 5:37 ff.; 6:13; 13:19, 24 ff.; Mark 1:12 ff.; 3:22 ff.; Luke 4:1 ff.; 10:17 ff.; 11:21 f.; 22:31; John 8:44; 12:31; 13:2; 14:30; 16:11; 17:15; Acts 5:3; 10:38; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 12:7; Eph. 4:27; 6:11 f.; 16; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 2:14; Jas. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 2:13 f.; 3:8 ff.; 5:18 f.; Jude 9; Rev. *passim*, especially 12:20. The evidence points clearly to the attempt to grapple with the problem of evil in terms of a *moral* dualism based on Jewish apocalyptic. All the evil of body and spirit is rebellion against God. The whole opposition to God is cosmic evil and this is the work of a personal Prince of evil who is a fallen angel, a creature and finally subject to the will of God. This dualism of a conflict between God and Satan is not absolute or eternal. It expresses, however, the certainty of the present existence of a strong evil power in whose rebellion all men are involved, and to which are due all their sins and ills.

Many find it hard to believe in a personal Devil but it is, in fact, no harder to accept supernatural evil than supernatural

good. The whole New Testament assumes that the forces against God are organized in the kingdom of evil which results from the rebellion of creatures made free and their desire to usurp the Throne of God. Whatever we may think today, the idea met a real need in the early Church and was one way of expressing the fact of evil. As a view of the origin of evil and as an explanation of why God tolerates it, it is by no means complete, but it is one way, having Biblical sanction, of accounting for evil without reducing good to an illusion. *Satan* and *Devil* may still be used to symbolize everything that is against the will of God and so for the believer, the enemy.

W. Robinson: *The Devil and God* discusses the light thrown on the problem of evil by the belief in a personal devil. He does not conceal the difficulties involved but shows that the idea has validity for the Christian. See also G. B. Caird: *Principalities and Powers*, for N. T. evidence.

#### 4. LIGHT FROM THE CROSS

In a once famous book, *Foundations of Belief*, A. J. Balfour describes the various ways in which the human mind has grappled with the problem of evil. 'Whatever be the worth of speculations like these', he concludes, 'it is not in the moments when they are most required that they come effectively to our rescue. What is needed is such a living faith in God's relation to man as shall leave no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed order so apt to rise in us at the sight of undeserved pain.'

This is well said. We must never forget that behind the question: Is the universe friendly? lies the great fear that the power behind the universe is indifferent to what goes on within it. Any answer to the question, and to the problem which constrains it, must deal with this fear. We have already suggested reasons to show that the existence of evil is not necessarily inconsistent with the doctrine of divine Providence and have shown that the belief in a personal devil can help to account for the origin of evil. These arguments help but they are not sufficient by themselves. We need the assurance that God does not merely look on evil from outside, seeing the struggle and suffering of His creatures without sharing their plight. We need the certainty of the ultimate

elimination of evil. We cannot, however, argue to these conclusions. It is possible for the reason to reach a view of Providence in the sense that the Creator does not leave the world to itself as if it did not matter that it fell to ruin. But no reasoning can establish the belief that God so acts in the world as to give the eternal pattern of its true life, making it clear that evil is not ultimate and that He is ceaselessly at work to fulfil His purpose. In the end, it is God who gives to the question which all men ask the answer which they must have. So we turn again to the Biblical revelation.

In his book *Have Faith in God*, Dr N. H. Snaith shows how the Old Testament meets the problem of the suffering of the righteous. He shows how the Deuteronomists, under the leading of the Prophets, reached the conviction that righteousness and prosperity always go together; how experience seemed often to deny this; and how the later Jewish thinkers, especially the Psalmists, reacted to the problem. Whatever else they doubted and however great the puzzle of life they clung fast to the certainty of the goodness of God. We must never underestimate the contribution to our problem of the Hebrew faith, held against all that challenged it, as expressed in the Psalter and summed up e.g., in Isa. 63:9. God wrought in Israel the miracle which enabled many to triumph over suffering by faith. Yet there were others who failed to enter into their inheritance and asked: Why should we believe that? In the fulness of time God met their question with yet a greater word.

Balfour goes on to say that the faith which is needed 'is possessed by those who vividly realize the Christian form of Theism. For they worship One who is no remote contriver of a universe to whose ills He is indifferent. If they suffer, did He not on their account suffer also? If suffering falls not always on the most guilty, was He not innocent? Shall they cry aloud that the world is ill-designed for their convenience, when He for their sakes subjected Himself to its conditions?' Between the faith of Isa. 63:9 and the utter assurance of Rom. 8:18 ff. stands the Cross of Christ. This declares that God Himself comes into the evil and pain of the world in order to rescue men from it. In Christ, God Himself goes into the far country and shares the husks that He may bring His sons home. What we see in Christ cruci-

fied in a moment of time, God is eternally. This is no blind faith. The Christian has the facts before him to make it certain that God does not simply permit evil and leave the world to it. He actively engages with the enemy. The Cross is no tragedy. It is the resolution of all tragedy. It bears compelling witness both to God's sympathy with man and to what He does to deliver him from evil.

Here is the answer to the problem of evil which no argument could possibly reach. It is the gift of God. The revelation in Christ gives certainty even when, in the face of evil, all arguments for the love and justice of God seem unreal. At the Cross we can be lifted above our imperfect thoughts about God for we see that He spares not His own Son and makes His sharing in the suffering of the world the very means of its redemption.

Jesus Himself was not ignorant of the cruel facts which challenge our doctrine of God. He experienced them to the full and the problem was as bitter for Him as for any man. Yet He still could say: Father into Thy hands....., Luke 23:46. I have before me as I write two pictures, each characteristic of its subject. In one Socrates sits teaching, in the other Jesus hangs on the Cross. Only Jesus entered fully into, and triumphed over, pain. This is the reason why we know that only He can meet us in our utter need. 'There are still questions that we long to answer', comments Maude Royden, 'cries that are wrung from us by our own or others pain, to which it seems there comes no answer from a remote, all-powerful, unheeding God. To this I answer only one thing—the thing that made and keeps me not only in belief in God but in the Christian idea of God. Of all the greater founders of world faiths there is only this One who can teach us what Christ taught; for there is only One who is crucified .....So I go back in thought to the one God who shared our sufferings. In the darkness we find Him, and though He offers no glib explanation of the darkness, He gives us strength to endure and we know Him and believe and worship.'

So it is that the Christian should be the last to fear to face the world's suffering. He too needs human courage and patience but his strength does not lie in mere human confidence to understand and rise above evil. He believes *with* Jesus and shares His faith that in spite of every appearance to the

contrary God is love and love is the final law of the universe. He believes also *in* Jesus and so has the knowledge that God has come down to overcome evil. The heart of the New Testament is not the fact of evil but deliverance from it and the assurance of the restoration of the whole creation to God — of man to fellowship and of the universe to harmony. In Christ that rebellion against God which is the source of evil is brought to a head and overcome, cf. 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14.f.; 1 John 3:8.

E. Stanley Jones: *Christ and Human Suffering*.

## 5. SHARING IN GOD'S REDEEMING <sup>Suffering</sup>PURPOSE

Suffering has a positive place in God's ordering of human life. There are many spiritual values which would not exist in a world from which suffering is excluded. The fullest and happiest lives are not those into which suffering has not come but those into which it has come and has been dealt with creatively. Trouble can teach men that they need only God and nothing but God. When all else has been taken away they learn that God is enough. They have found Him even in that suffering which is hardest to bear, that which seems futile. The evidence of the believer's trust in God when in pain, and his acceptance of it as in the divine purpose, is important for the solution of the problem of evil.

It is a fact that pain borne without plaint gives courage to others and can arouse faith in them. It can also arouse compassion. One of the great gifts of Christ to the world has been the development of sensitiveness to the suffering of others. The grace of compassion does not arise easily from the doctrines of *maya* and *karma*. It is characteristically Christian to meet suffering with compassion and help. We do not claim that suffering is justified by the sympathy and kindness it evokes, but we do believe that God teaches us that the suffering of the world is a reason to accept our own suffering in such a way as to help others. So we come to the great Biblical truth of redemptive suffering.

The Prophets who saw the ruin that would come from the sin of the people, and warned them in vain, and had to share in the ruin when it came, were the last to complain or to

seek immunity, cf. Exod. 32:30 ff. The Servant of Isa. 53 knew as he suffered that God had called him to stand where others should stand and to endure what they should endure. Of the many who have followed in this tradition we may refer to Schweitzer, moved by the pain of creation. 'From this community of suffering I have never tried to withdraw myself. It seemed to me a matter of course that we should all take our share of the burden of pain which lies upon the world...It was clear to me that no *explanation* of the evil in the world would ever satisfy me; all the explanations... had no other object than to make it possible for men to share in the misery around them with less keen feelings.'

This is the way of the Cross which, as we have seen, throws the greatest light on the problem of suffering, especially of the innocent. 1 Pet. 2:22 ff. shows how soon the Church grasped this. In Christ, men learned that suffering is more than a penalty for sin or a discipline for the soul. It can be a means of grace and a witness to faith. There are many non-Christians who practise the imitation of Christ, but only the Christian understands it in the fellowship of His sufferings. 'Allow me', said Ignatius, 'to be an imitator of the passion of my God.' Nor is this, in Christ or the Christian, mere immolation. He who suffered rose again. Where evil was met and suffering was endured there was victory. The Resurrection gives the assurance that, in the face of suffering, perplexity is not the last word 1 Pet. 1:3 ff.

There is no power greater than the love which suffers and endures, and still is strong. If the world can be redeemed only by the passion of the Son of God, the redeemed still living in a sinful world, cannot expect exemption from suffering. But they know that God suffers with them and that there is nothing which cannot be turned to gain with Him. Many testify that to know this is the reward of suffering and that it can come no other way than that by which God in Christ achieves His purpose.

Roger Lloyd: *The Mastery of Evil*.

## 6. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

We have been suggesting certain lines of faith and thought along which it is possible to attempt the reconciliation of belief in a God of all power and love with the many facts which challenge it, and sometimes seem to deny it. Such conclusions as we have reached may be used to consider, in more detail, what *Providence* means in Christian Theology. There are some who hold that the Christian doctrine of God may best be summed up in this term. It is perhaps better to regard Providence as covering all the ways in which the Biblical doctrine of God is related to the life of the believer. In what follows we shall consider divine Providence in respect of *nature*, *history*, and the *individual*.

J. C. Shebbear: *Problems of Providence*.

W. R. Matthews: *God in Christian Thought and Experience*.

H. H. Farmer: *The World and God*.

D. S. Cairns: *The Riddle of the World*.

J. H. Oldham: *Life is Commitment*.

(Edited) *Man's Dilemma and God's Answer*.

J. C. Bennett (Ed.): *Man's Disorder and God's Design*.

F. W. Camfield: *The Collapse of Doubt*.

F. von Hugel: *Essays and Addresses* I 99 ff.; II 167 ff.

(i) There is in the universe a principle of constancy so that, for example, fire always burns but never freezes. We all live on this basis. The Bible ascribes it to divine Providence, e.g., Gen. 8:22; Jer. 31:35; 33:20; Matt. 5:45; 6:28 ff. Men who live in towns tend to forget how much they depend on the regular order of nature—sun and rain, seed time and harvest; but the countrymen, who live in closest touch with nature, are most ready to accept the divine ordering of life. Yet, as we in India know, where there is no knowledge of the one true God, the facts often give rise to fear. The terrors of the unknown, of evil and powerful spirits, which darken so much village life, can be overcome only by belief in One who holds us in His providential care and controls the powers of nature for our good.

It is a common failure, however, even among believers, to take God for granted when things go right and to remember Him only when things go wrong e.g., the rains fail; and then to deny His Providence. Yet the possibility of things 'going



wrong' for some is always present in a world where the processes of nature are always going on for all. When natural calamities challenge the working of Providence we may note: (a) The operation of constant laws may lead, at times and in some places, to earthquakes, accidents in mines, etc. That which is necessary to the life of all e.g., heat, may on occasion bring suffering to some e.g., volcanic eruption. (b) Spiritual and moral growth depends on the fact that the laws of nature are not modified to meet the convenience of the moment. The Father does not intervene to spare His sons the discipline of events. (c) Pain is necessary to health and the experience of sickness is the main way leading to cures. So also disasters are often the means to the discovery of new ways by which to control and use the forces of nature. (d) We ought not to concentrate on disasters, which are outstanding because they are abnormal, and forget the normal course of good. Our very anxiety over calamities is evidence that we regard them as exceptional. It would be a problem indeed if the great constancies were to fail. (e) Above all, remember that the great truth expressed in Rom. 5:1 ff. is the extension into the human sphere of a great law of God for all His creatures. The whole process of nature illustrates the principle that trouble makes for endurance. Courage seems to be the first commandment of nature. Every animal is what it is through accepting risks.

Such considerations may help us to see that what appears calamity may yet turn out to be in harmony with the loving purpose of God. In working out any particular instance do not begin by denying either the power or love of God; forgetting that even in the disasters in the bringing about of which man seems to have no share, the effect of sin can often be traced. We cannot expect to know all that lies behind each difficult event. The Christian, however, brings to the discussion of hard facts the knowledge that God is One who has us in His care; and the desire to learn from every experience of life what He requires of us in co-operating with His purpose. We do not begin with the facts of nature, good or bad, and deduce what God is like. We begin with what He has disclosed of Himself, and come down from Him to interpret the facts. We cannot infer God from nature; rather, our knowledge of God applied to nature explains the order, beauty

and fitness therein and makes its dark side, if not always intelligible, yet tolerable.

When we say that God is active in the regularities of the natural order we do not imply a strict determinism. The laws of nature are not a mechanical system but the ways of a loving Father whose great purpose is to bring many sons to glory. Hence there is always room for spiritual action to modify events by what we call miracle. This is never a breach of the order of nature but a further expression of the same divine power and purpose which determines the order. Miracle is neither irrational nor capricious. It is a work of divine power beyond, but not contrary to, the scheme of things as we ordinarily know it. For the Christian, a miracle is not a wonder or portent but an event in which the love and power of God are manifest. It is a declaration that the natural order serves spiritual ends; a point at which the divine Providence in and over nature is declared with special directness and clarity. Miracles may seem strange even to those who believe in the Providence of God; it would be stranger if there were none.

(ii) The relation of Providence to history is not easy to define. History is the sphere in which nature is at work in its regular order, and man is allowed to exercise his freedom. How, then can we think of God bending events to His purposes without turning nature into disorder and violating human freedom? The Bible is certain that He has history in His control; that He calls men, and guides events towards the fulfilment of His saving purpose. There is no inconsistency here.

Again, we do not make a deduction from the facts we observe to the Providence of God. We come as believers in God, through His own self-disclosure, and find that history shows evidence of God's care—both in saving and in punishing. The Prophets were on sound ground when they interpreted the history of Israel in terms of the evil which follows sin. They stressed that it was dishonest to think that God remembers His people only in prosperity. They saw Him at work to fulfil His purpose in all events; good and bad, for not all are according to His will. Much that happens is due to sin thwarting God's purpose. There are some events which conceal rather than reveal that purpose. But it is not

God's way to intervene to prevent sin working out in evil consequences; nor will He enforce His will. Thus the very fact that history records God's judgment on sin is providential. It is just because God has *all* in His keeping that rebellion against Him brings disaster. Many of the evils which we think a good God ought to prevent are possible only because the Maker and Ruler of all is consistent in righteousness. We might well question divine Providence if we found that God ignored sin and did not bring judgment upon it, cf. the book of Amos.

Providence includes both what God does in history and what He does to history. We have seen how God chose one nation for the sake of all and in it displayed the working of His Providence e.g., Deut. 7:6; Rom. 3:1 f. But divine Providence is not confined to the Covenant People. God is ever at work to over-rule events, both by destroying and by building up. Thus, for example, the fall of Assyria and Babylon, and the rise of Greece and Rome both have part in the providential ordering of history, the meaning of which is seen when, in the fulness of time, Christ came. The very fact that we divide history into B.C. and A.D. reminds us that here is the event which determines our interpretation of history. It is the record both of judgment and salvation for in Christ God breaks in to judge and to redeem. The Cross, where the holy love of God comes to meet the sin of man, is central in the Christian reading of history. It exposes the truth about sin and declares God's judgment on it, even while He takes the very instrument of sin and turns it into the means of salvation.

God did not, however, intervene to prevent the Crucifixion of His Son any more than He does to prevent war. Men were left free to kill Christ. But, in the Providence of God, His death sets Him on the Throne as Saviour. Both the sin and the saving work are events in history; and God gathers up the sin to serve His purpose. Now we know that nothing can prevent its fulfilment. The God who in Christ came into history will never forsake us. He who raised Christ from the dead has the will and the power to overcome all evil.

We have argued that suffering, in the long run, works out to moral ends. This is not always immediately apparent.

But there is no reason to suppose that God's purposes must be fulfilled within the limits of this life. In fact, we can meet many of the problems of life here only by faith in the life beyond. The doctrine of Providence requires infinite horizons. The Bible declares the fulfilment of the divine purpose in terms of resurrection. Of this the assurance is the actual Resurrection of Christ. God does not promise that we shall escape earthly evil by surviving death; but that, even as He enables us to rise above the evils here so that no human experience need be quite fruitless, so He will give victory over death.

Thus the Gospel appeals to eternity rather than to the future for the justification of faith in Providence. When all has been said to mitigate the problem of evil, history is ambiguous and gives no certain assurance of God's victory over evil. The meaning of history belongs to the knowledge which is in part. It points beyond itself. Here and now there are events over which man cannot have complete victory. The assurance is that these cannot triumph finally over God's will to redeem history. A paragraph from Neibuhr is relevant:

It is this genius for being involved in, and yet transcending, the vicissitudes of history which makes Biblical faith superior to both the this-worldly religions, which seek to find the meaning of history in the historical process itself, and to the other-worldly religions, which flee history for a passionless eternity. A Biblical faith in Providence prompts Christians to take historic struggles for justice and righteousness seriously; and yet to have a final resource against despair when the balance sheet of an age, decade or generation does not make sense, or makes only tragic sense.

(iii) The story of Joseph is a typical example of the relation of divine Providence to the life of the individual. All manner of evil and suffering was involved but everything contributed to Joseph's career, to the part he played in the history of his nation, and so to God's purpose for the world. It would not seem so at the time to Joseph but later he could say that the guiding hand of God was present all the time and that what men meant for evil, He meant for good, Gen. 50:20 cf. Isa. 42: 16. God did not cause the sin of the brothers,

of Potiphar's wife, and others, but He used all that happened for this purpose.

For all of us life is complicated by sin and its results. What we are is the result of what we have done either with or against the will of God. If we persist in sin we cannot complain if evil follows, with effects on others as well as ourselves. Providence does not mean that men shall escape the consequences of sin, whether they or others commit it. It is, indeed, within Providence that sin has ill results. There is no mystery here. Much suffering is the result of sin and the sign of God's judgment upon it. He would be other than we know Him to be were it otherwise.

Yet the work of Christ for and in sinners shows that God can over-rule even sin and can use man's very need to restore him. The teaching and work of Christ, always in care for the individual, is the assurance that nothing in the life of each man is beyond Providence. Nothing happens but God knows, cares, and is at work to use it. Here and hereafter all is under the divine Providence.

The most perfect expression of what Providence means to the Christian is Paul's great utterance in Rom. 8:28 ff. This does not mean that the believer cannot suffer or that his confidence in God will never be threatened. It reminds us that the Gospel has never promised immunity from evil. The world, as we have stressed, was made, not for comfort, but for the building up of sons of God. So, when Jesus promised peace to the disciples, He did not mean that they would be spared conflict but that they would be given power to overcome. It is not for the Christian to ask to escape the storms of life. He is bidden, often, to launch out into the deep and is offered a confidence which no peril can destroy and by which troubles can be borne. Indeed, it is mostly in troubles that men learn the sufficiency of God. When all else is taken away, they find that they need nothing but God and He is enough.

It is true that in trouble the world seems to be against us but we have the greater certainty in the promises of God. It is hard to feel the presence of God but we do not depend on feelings. The assurance such as is given in Rom. 8 is more than a particular answer to a particular need; it is the declaration that, when things are bad, we can enter more fully

into that experience of God's gracious dealings and of our dependence on Him, of which the whole Biblical revelation is the ground, cf. Rom. 15:4. The Bible warns us that the action of God does not necessarily conform to man's expectation, e.g., Isa. 55:8 f. It is a temptation to dictate to God how He should act. 'What have I done?' we cry when trouble comes. We think that prosperity must follow righteousness. Job learned that this is the human, not divine, valuation of suffering. The true faith seeks God's help not to escape from suffering but to experience the love of God in suffering, cf. Isa. 53; Luke 13:16; John 9:2f. The Biblical teaching here is summed up in Heb. 11-12 with its testimony that faith in the living God, whatever the circumstances, brings us into the knowledge of His love and power.

We have no space here to discuss all the implications of belief in Providence for the life of the believer, but we cannot leave the theme without noting that Providence is the basis of prayer. We cannot pray if we believe that our life is in control of fate, or chance, or even of the scientist. Prayer involves the prior fundamental conviction as to the sovereign purpose and power of a God of love. In the Bible, the man of God prayed on the basis of first-hand experience of such a God. Prayer on their side was met by the answering reality which transformed faith into assurance, e.g., Ps. 91-99. What we see in the Psalmist reaches its climax in Jesus, e.g., Mark 1:35; 14:35f.; Luke 9:28ff.; 11:1ff.; 18:1. The Biblical confidence in God's providential care is most clearly expressed in the actual life of Him who, by the power of prayer, faced evil, endured, and overcame it. It is clear that the faith of the New Testament moves in the realm of prayer and that the first Christians lived and conquered in its power, e.g., Acts 12:42; 12:5; 1 Thess. 5:17; Jas. 5:13 ff. There is much in our modern understanding of God's working in His world which raises questions that did not occur in earlier days; but there is nothing to deny the fundamental truth of this faith.

When we pray we say: *Father*. Because His Providence is over nature we can ask for daily bread. Because it is over history we can pray for the coming of His Kingdom. Because it is over the individual we can ask to be delivered from evil and to be forgiven the sin which denies God's ordering of

our lives. The Lord's Prayer is the most far-reaching account of Providence and its most potent expression.

What has been written is but the barest outline of the Christian answer to the problem of evil. Much that has been touched on points forward to matters which will be discussed more fully in Volume II. It must be confessed that no really satisfactory answer is possible in this world. Our knowledge is in part only and many of our questions remain unanswered. We are in a realm where human reason and insight can go only so far and our power to understand is limited. Always there is the need to trust the love and wisdom of God. We can say that He has shown us enough to enable us to believe even where we cannot see. Never ought we to allow what we do not know to deprive us of what we do know. We cannot claim the ability to explain and justify the evil around and in us but we can claim to know that God has acted to save us from it. 'But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we behold . . . Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.' Those who know God in Christ, Himself bearing our pains and crucified for our salvation, have yet to face problems that defy the understanding, but they can say that they have seen greater things. 'The severity of the diseases we endure', says, Farrer, 'is a poor argument to refuse the remedy, and if malice be-devils the world, what reason is it to fling back the pleadings of immortal love?'